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ARGOSY

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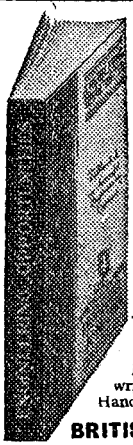

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TESTIMONIALS FROM SATISFIED STUDENTS

. . . For lack of time my output is small, but during the past few months I have sold the following: GERMAN PRISONERS (*English Review*), BIRD ISLAND (*Argus*), CAREERS FOR GIRLS (*Teen and Twenty*), PREMATURE BABIES (*Housewife*), CHILDREN'S WARD (*local*), REPERTORY IN LYNN (*Theatre News*), BRITAIN'S OLDEST FAIR (*East Anglian*).
I concentrated on smaller markets because I wanted to pay for the course by selling my work, and this I have achieved.
Miss D. H., KING'S LYNN.

1st June, 1949.
. . . I have to report that my story STONY SOIL has sold to the American magazine for fifty dollars.
R. A. P. (Clerk), KENSINGTON.

17th December, 1949.
. . . You will be pleased to hear that I am in the Christmas number of *Teen and Twenty*, my own sketches, too! *Woman's Mirror* has also taken five articles, and I have sold another to *Needlewoman and Needlecraft*.
M. B., COLWYN.

27th October, 1949.
. . . I have pleasure in forwarding the exercises on Lesson Nine, and would point out that an article on this theme has been accepted by *Housewife* . . . this has given me considerable encouragement, as it is my first article to be accepted by a periodical of this class . . .
(Police Inspector), WINCHMORE HILL.

March, 1949.
. . . I have recently sold a short story called PERHAPS TOO SOON to the magazine *Good Housekeeping*, so naturally I want to thank you for all the help you have given me . . .
Miss B. D., HEADCORN.

6th August, 1949.
. . . I am writing this short note to inform you that my short story, THE ARREST, has been accepted and published by *Reveille* . . .
T. P. (Bus Driver), STOKE-ON-TRENT.

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3rd October, 1949.
. . . I recently added up my earnings from the *Eastern Daily Press* and found it to be about £75.
Mrs. J. M. F. (Housewife), B.A.O.R. 5.

17th October, 1949.
. . . I rewrote my story on the lines you suggested and sent it to the *Sunday Chronicle*. It appeared on page 2 of the paper yesterday. A few cuts had been made, but otherwise it was printed as I wrote it.
Lt.-Col. W. S. H., JERSEY.

29th November, 1949.
. . . It was extremely kind of you to send me such an excellent "write up" for my book, and I sincerely thank you for it. Naturally I am very excited about it. What is most gratifying is that the publishers have shown a definite enthusiasm about the work. Many thanks for the help and encouragement you have always given me.
Capt. B. N. (Royal Navy, Retired), FOLKESTONE.

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ARGOSY

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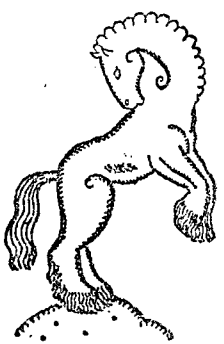
Moon Set

BETWEEN April and May
No more can pass
Than the edge of a mist
Or a sidelong ray
From the moon or the glass
Where the little moons hide
To shew me your wrist
On whiteness and nothing beside.

The night is still,
The darkness knows
How far away
A wavering rill
Of warm air goes ;
Though no bough hums,
Between April and May
A streak of plum-blossom comes.

GORDON BOTTOMLEY



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A MATTER OF LOVE

"The blessed St. Anthony," cried Maruca, "he has moved me a mountain!"

by MacKINLEY HELM

IT was nice at the inn those first weeks. I had a room with wide windows over the entrance, and a balcony from which I could see everything that went on in the town out-of-doors. Sooner or later, in the course of each day, all the inhabitants passed through the plaza, so that before long I knew them by sight from the mayor downwards.

The mayor of San Rafael de Aldama was not all that a man in his office should be. He drank more than he needed, pilfered other men's pockets as well as their wives, and burnt the hair off the heads of young boys in the municipal prison. But people said he had always been wild and no one could change him.

He was young and good looking and came of good family. The townspeople smiled at his whims and his rages; and since there were few handsome young men left in town, there were many young women ready and willing to exchange bright laughter with him, although I quickly observed that Maruca Ugarte, the innkeeper's daughter, was not of that number.

When the mayor's successor, impatient to sit in his chair and lie in his bed, had him coolly shot down, I confess that I missed the figure he cut as he scouted the plaza in the early evening. Maruca, who was perhaps the prettiest girl in the city, one day explained why she seldom looked up when the mayor rode past the girls in the plaza in front of the inn. Maruca wanted very much to get married, while the mayor, at least in a ceremonial way, had a wife and five children. Maruca wore black at the time of his burial as all the girls did, but she showed no sign of suffering any personal loss.

Maruca was blonde, but I think not by nature. Her eyes and their lashes were dark, her lips full, and she carried her roundness on a delicate frame. Her legs, under her stockings, looked as though she had brushed them with ashes of lilac. If the cleverest boys had not all left the impoverished town to go up to Mexico City—some to work, some to study—she would not have lacked suitors. As it was, her matrimonial prospects seemed more slight than her figure.

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One morning Maruca giggled her way into my room with the maid who brought me my tray of breakfast.

"Good-day, Mariquita," I said. "*Que pasó?* What now?"

"Last night," she began, practising English, "last night the new waiter, Alberto, is too yo'ng, make a kiss on my face and my brother he find us. Alberto cannot come to the hotel no more."

"What a pity!" I said, thinking, really, of the new young waiter so soon out of a job.

"Is no pity, señor," said Maruca. "Is too yo'ng."

She shook out her pretty, blonde curls and spun around on her toes. She twinkled out of my room on absurdly high heels, banged the door, and skipped down the tiled staircase.

"Is too yo'ng for Maruca," she sang, going on with her practice of English. I sighed and remembered poor Alberto; but when, after a moment, I looked out of the window, there was Alberto, brown-skinned and shining, flashing his teeth at a maid from the Casa del Lago, while around him the cheerful life of the plaza went on undiminished.

Visitors used to enquire whether I found the inn not too noisy. It was noisy of course. The bells in the pink Gothic church rang night and day. All day and all night little boys scaled the tower as goats scale the lofty grey pyramids in the green Maya jungle. They rang improvised changes and swarmed down again, their voices shrill in the silence the tower gave out when the bell ringing was over.

The Plaza was noisily lived in all day and most of the night. Food was hawked there until the last country Indian folded himself in his blanket and went to sleep on the steps of the church. Before dawn, the whole town shuffled down the steep, cobbled streets to the central fountain; and while each man waited his turn to dip his pair of kerosene cans, he poured out his measure of yesterday's gossip.

The talk at the fountain awakened the drivers of trucks and taxis who had parked for the night in front of the inn. Then the carters and porters trooped out of their holes at the first sound and rattle of the first pavement food stand, drowsily opened to cater for a new day of hunger. After that, the day's commerce really began with the cries of bootblacks and vendors of lottery tickets. A cobbler's shop sprang up under my window, a blacksmith pounded his forge on the corner. The public life of the town was enchanting, and I might have stopped on at the inn a long time—but for Maruca's flare-up of temper, the morning she heaved San Antonio out of my window.

After the archangel himself, the town's patron, Saint Anthony

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was easily the most popular saint in the place. What with the shortage of sons and lovers, no saint was more often besought than that son of Saint Francis. I could see very well from my bedroom, on a Tuesday morning, the weekly procession of young girls and women on their way home from his church, two miles down the valley, where every unhusbanded daughter and every wife without children went to pray to the saint for the boon which she felt would complete her.

Maruca, I knew, was making a set of petitions at Saint Anthony's shrine, and so far, the kiss which Alberto had made on her face was about all that there was to show for her trouble. After her ninth Tuesday pilgrimage, I waved to her out of my window, and soon she came up to watch me take breakfast.

"*Pués*," I said, "how long must you wait for an answer?"

"You know perfectly well, señor," said Maruca in Spanish, under her burden of sorrow forgetting to practise, "that a girl in this town has no more chance to get married than a Protestant *gringo*, forgive me, has got of getting to Heaven."

"Still," said I, "we Protestant *gringos* are taught that faith will move mountains. Mustn't you give San Antonio a little more time?"

"San Antonio pooh!" said Maruca. "I'm already eighteen and I've been saying my prayers for a sweetheart since I was fifteen years old. San Antonio hasn't moved me an anthill. I shall give him a lesson!" Whereupon she snatched up my choicest sugar-cane saint and threw him over the balcony into the street.

Since this was not, in fact, the first time I had seen a saint punished, I was perhaps not so shocked as I ought to have been. Still, I was angry, for I felt I was bearing the greater weight of Maruca's displeasure myself.

I had worked hard to improve there my collection of Mexican *santos*, begun long before with a saint who was said to wink upon sinners and spread covering clouds on love's path. Day by day men had come to my door with saints in indifferent condition—battered, tarnished, dismembered, unhallowed—and to every one I had repeated the formula: "Bring me a *santo* as bright as a new silver peso and be sure I will buy him." San Antonio, who had been an immaculate figure, stood two feet high. He wore a brown habit studded with stars; and his tonsured pate, of an ochre enamel, shone under a red and gold halo. He had blue china eyes, bisque fingers with nearly real fingernails, and cheeks the colour of raspberry soda. Furthermore, the art which had made him out of sugar-cane stuffing had been lost for six generations. I could not repair him if he were broken, and I could not, I feared, find another like him. I was rebuking Maruca with this information

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when there came a quick rap on my door and a young man fell down the step that led into my room.

"Excuse me, sir," he said, pushing his shaggy brown hair from his eyes. "Excuse me, miss," he said to Maruca, who was kicking and squealing at the foot of my bed because I reproached her. "I was just below," he continued, "when this what's-its-name fell out of the window. It hit my shoulder. I thought perhaps I ought to return it."

Maruca jumped up and caught the young man in her arms.

"Praise be to Saint Anthony!" I heard her exclaim. "He has moved me a mountain!"

The mountain Saint Anthony seemed to have moved was a broad shouldered English hillock, not at all bad-looking. He had good eyes, a nice smile, and his brown tweed jacket had an unmistakably English cut. He was a *gringo*, in short, and I hoped Don Anselmo Ugarte, Maruca's father, who thought *gringos* all stank of irreligion and rape, would not choose this moment to inspect an old leak in my bathroom.

The young man had ten words of Spanish and Maruca only slightly more of *inglés*; but while they sat on the edge of my bed and held hands, they managed to say a good deal through the tips of their fingers.

"Mariquita," I said, "this situation calls for some coffee," and while she was gone to see to it, the boy asked me if I thought I could fix it so he could see her quite often.

"How long have you been in this country?" I asked. "Don't you know how the Mexicans feel about their wives, daughters, and sisters? They know only one object between men and women; and when the women are theirs, by use or by law, they do not approve of another man's object."

"But if I could prove my good intentions?" the boy asked.

"They wouldn't believe you," I said. "And besides, although the Ugartes are very good people, they would all of them rather see their women in hell than married to free-thinking foreigners."

"Whew!" the boy said. "They seem to want it all ways!" But after taking the coffee, he moved into the inn from his room at the boarding house run by doña Carlota, the Marquesa de Mora.

I was full of foreboding when I saw that he had transferred his belongings. He walked with a light, swinging gait, and a broad grin appeared on his lean, freckled face when he looked up at my window. That was on Tuesday. On the second day after, bursting into my room before breakfast, he looked very disconsolate.

"I'm in for it, sir, just as you said!" he exclaimed. "Maruca's brother has called me out to a duel!"

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"Nonsense!" I said. "People don't fight duels any more. Sit down and tell me about it."

Maruca, it seemed, had gone to the boy's room that morning, just for a minute; but it proved an inopportune minute, for when she went out again into the patio, César, her brother, happened to walk into the inn from the street—or perhaps from the study which he and Luke Bustamante had rented, just off the plaza, when they came down from college in Mexico City.

Now César, although he was only nineteen, was already a cynic. He was used to the system which provided ladies of standing with the few means they had of relaxing away from their homes. On the surface, their lives ran to the same simple pattern. They bore their children with perennial cheer, put up with dull maids from the *pueblos*, presided at tedious family dinners at midday, and sat patiently at home in the evening until their husbands came back from the domino table, or elsewhere, to take supper at ten. They almost never went out in the evening, least of all with their husbands, and such love as they leaned on at home took the form, as it often turned out, of a warder.

Custom allowed each well-guarded wife to boast to her friends of her husband's suspicions, but her sole remaining felicity was the system which allowed her to go to church by herself in the morning and, with luck, pay a gallant, occasional call on her way home again. All in all, it was hard for a middle-aged *gringo* to understand why Maruca should have brooded quite so much upon marriage.

It had that year come to pass that César and Luke, who laid out their readings on alternate mornings, had enjoyed the fruits of this system in their private study; so that César, having thought to himself: "The dear ladies have such soft hearts and weak minds," must have gone on to suppose that his sister, though not yet a wife, was in no way different.

"So you see," I said to the visiting boy, after explaining the system, "friendship with women isn't known in this country."

"Friendship be damned!" said he. "I want to marry her. But what if I killed her brother beforehand? I'm twenty one and he's only a kid. And I'm quite a good shot, if I say so myself."

I looked out of my window onto the plaza. The cobbler was tapping some satin slippers. One of the Jauregui sisters who lived on Post Office Street was crossing the square with a dish of fresh teacakes for doña Rosario, the mother of Luke Bustamante. And across the way, beneath boughs of mimosa, Mistress Lolita Turrôn de Vera, a petite singing bird in a black lace mantilla, looked up and down the street. Outside was life, merry and tranquil, while inside, the shadow of death flickered over the wall.

I resolved to put *gringo* honour aside and speak to Señor Ugarte.

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I would ask him, I thought, to stop all this nonsense by sending César to Mexico City, or out to one of the family ranches, while I tried to persuade the young Englishman to get out of town. But down in the office, they told me the patron had just driven away, and nobody knew when he planned to return, not even his wife.

By late afternoon, I had another idea.

"If you don't want to use pistols," I said to the young man at supper, "you have only one way out. You will have to propose bows and arrows."

"Three arrows at, say twenty paces?" he asked. "It's an idea!" And he laughed for the first time that day.

"You can say it's an old English custom," I added.

The next morning—that was Friday—I sent Pedro, my servant, around with a note to César Ugarte, on the chance that he might be alone in his study. I solemnly asked him, on behalf of my principal, and in the interest of international good will, to dispense with engaging a duplicate witness. I proposed that he send his own man, if he pleased, to the inn.

Just before lunch, I was handed the card of Luke Bustamante, the young Count del Lago, who lived in a purple stone house on the opposite corner. He wore a black suit with wide shoulders over a waist of incredible thinness. He had dark, curly hair, a grave smile, and affable manners. He bowed from his hips, put me well at my ease, and listened attentively while I announced that my friend would fight to the death with bows and arrows. I spoke about heads, shafts, feathers, butts, nocks; and the serious boy showed his very good breeding by not looking surprised.

I called after lunch on my friend Edward Margrove. We sat on his terrace and sipped old tequila flavoured with cloves.

"Funny thing happened today," said the doctor. "Do you know young Bustamante, the Conde del Lago, who lives in his grandfather's place in the plaza? Came here today, he and César Ugarte; said did I mind if they tried out the archery set?"

"Yes, yes," I said.

"They shot in their tight coats and black hats, and they sent all my arrows into doña Monica's patio, over that wall. They said they were sorry and went away very politely. Funny, what?"

I was therefore not precisely astonished to find in my keybox that night a letter from Luke Bustamante. It was an exquisite note on delicate paper, full of figures of speech, in a script as stylish as a Spanish diploma. The letter had come, I was sure, from the booth in the plaza where choice compositions could be bought at so much a page. The author had rolled César's honour so carefully up in fine rhetoric that no reader could be so gross as to unroll and

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expose it; and even now I do not suggest that in planning to go up to Mexico City, César and Luke were so unmanly as to take to their heels in frightened retreat. They were withdrawing, of course, on a matter of principle.

As a matter of fact, the boys did not after all catch the night train for the capital. Soon after two o'clock in the morning, when the train came in from the border and César had not yet reached the station, Luke drove back to the plaza. He went, so he said, straight to the room he and César had hired as a study.

He knew, of course, if he did not say so, that César had arranged a rendezvous there. Still he could not have guessed that he would see what he saw: César Ugarte and Lolita de Vera, naked as the first man and woman in the Garden of Eden before their first sin. César lay sprawling over the bed which furnished the study, while Lolita lay crumpled up near the broken door of a wardrobe—both of them quiet, both of them dead. Timothy Vera, Lolita's husband, shot through the temple, his dapper moustaches flecked with his blood and his silvered Luger cold at his side, lay without breath on the worn brick floor.

Luke's mother, the dowager Countess del Lago, sent for me to come to the palace at half-past eight. Luke wanted to see me, she said in her note, before the formal enquiry in the new mayor's office. The boy begged me not to speak of the duel, nor the letter, and while I pondered my duty, he told me his story.

When he reached the San Rafael plaza some time after two, on his way back from the station, he had left his bags at his house on the corner and walked round to the study he and César had shared. He had roused the servant who slept on a mat in the portico, knocked at the door of the room, called softly, and tried the door handle. The lock he and César had bought to fit into the door appeared to have burst from its place, but the door was held fast from within by an old iron hasp. Luke went back to the entry.

"Have you seen César Ugarte?" he asked.

"He must be in there," said the watchman.

"Alone?" Luke enquired.

"*Quién sabe?*" said the leering porter. "A lady came just as the church bells struck midnight, and a gentleman maybe a half hour later. They were *gente decente*, you know, sir. They have been very quiet."

Luke asked if he had shown the gentleman into the study.

"On the contrary, señor," said the watchman, "I told him don César was out, but he gave me five pesos and pushed me away. Then I went around to the plaza and bought me a beer. The light was still on in the window when I got back to the house."

Luke had noticed the light, the only light burning in a houseful

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of empty *despachos* and shops. He asked the man if he thought he could get the door open.

"*Vámos a ver*," said the watchman, and with a little heaving and thrusting the old door gave way. Luke put his hands over his eyes as he sobbed out his account of death's revelation, and lay back in his chair in a spasm of terror. I waited until he recovered.

"Don't you see, sir," he said, "that while there are two young men and a young woman dead, there are two more young men and a young woman living—not that I care very much for the *gringo*."

"I see what you mean," I replied. "You want the dead to bury their dead by themselves."

"Something like that, señor," said Luke, "although for myself, I really don't care what the people would say. I was just thinking that we might spare Maruca still more pain."

"What will she do now?" I enquired. "Will she go away with the *gringo*?"

"Not if I can persuade her to live in this foolish old palace with me," the boy said.

"Do you mean that?" I asked.

"With all my heart, señor," he replied.

I walked with him along the street towards the inn. "Good luck, don't worry," I said, and stepped in to see the English boy. I told him that Luke would not speak of the bows and the silly arrows. The young man said he was glad of that. He was planning, he said, not quite without shame, to get right out of town and go to some place where a man didn't so easily get into deep water.

In the late afternoon of that day, I saw from my window three coffins borne over the plaza from Saint Raphael's church on the way to the burial ground by the road to the station; and heard, beyond sight, the thin tune of the flute that followed the dead to their graves. Turning away from the window, I lifted the sugar-cane saint from his shelf, wrapped him up in a pillowcase, and hid him away in a chest of blankets.

As I packed up to move, the following day, into the boarding-house run by doña Carlota, I wondered how long it would be till Maruca would take up love's system for young married women. I hoped she would follow the rules which Lolita de Vera forgot.

* * *

PETIT POINT

My wife and I have tried two or three times in the last forty years to have breakfast together, but it was so disagreeable we had to stop or our marriage would have been wrecked.

WINSTON CHURCHILL

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CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE

It seemed logical enough, in all conscience

by RAY BRADBURY

THE ship came down from space. It came down from the stars and the black velocities, and the shining movements and the silent gulfs of space. It was a new ship, the only one of its kind; it had fire in its belly and men in its body, and it moved with clean silence, fiery and hot. In it were seventeen men, including a captain. A crowd had gathered on the tarmac who shouted and waved their hands up into the sunlight, and the rocket had jerked up, bloomed out great flowers of heat and colour, and run away into space on the first voyage to Mars!

Now it was decelerating with metal efficiency in the upper zones of Martian atmosphere. It was still a thing of beauty and strength. It had shorn through meteor streams, it had moved in the majestic black midnight waters of space like a pale sea leviathan, it had passed the sickly, pocked mass of the ancient moon, and thrown itself onwards into one nothingness following another.

The men within it had been battered, thrown about, sickened, made well again, scarred, made pale, flushed, each in his turn. One man had died after a fall, but now, seventeen of the original eighteen, with their eyes clear in their heads, and their faces pressed to the thick glass portholes of the rocket, were watching Mars swing up under them.

"Mars! Mars! Good old Mars, here we are!" cried Navigator Petersen.

"Good old Mars!" said Hinkston the archæologist.

"Well," said Captain John Black.

The ship landed softly on a lawn of green grass. Outside, upon the lawn, stood an iron deer. Further up the lawn, a tall brown Victorian house sat in the quiet sunlight, all covered with scrolls and rococo, its windows made of blue and pink and yellow and green coloured glass. Upon the verandah were hairy geraniums and an old swing which was hooked into the verandah arch and which now swung back and forth, back and forth, in a little breeze.

At the top of the house was a cupola with diamond, leaded-glass windows, and a dunce-cap roof! Through the front window

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you could see an ancient piano with yellow keys and a piece of music entitled *Sweet Thames* sitting on the music rest.

Around the rocket in four directions spread the little town, green and motionless in the Martian spring. There were white houses and red brick ones, and tall elm trees blowing in the wind, and tall maples and horsechestnuts. And church steeples with golden bells silent in them.

The men in the rocket looked out and saw this. Then they looked at one another, and then they looked out again. They held on to each other's elbows, suddenly unable to breathe, it seemed. Their faces grew pale and they blinked constantly, running from glass porthole to glass porthole of the ship.

"I'll be damned," whispered Petersen, rubbing his face with his numb fingers, his eyes wet. "Who'd have believed it!"

"It can't be, it just can't be," said Hinkston.

"Good Lord," said Captain John Black.

There was a call from the chemist. "Sir, the atmosphere is fine for breathing, sir."

Black turned slowly. "Are you sure?"

"No doubt of it, sir."

"Then we'll go out," said Petersen.

"Yes, indeed," said Hinkston.

"Hold on," said Captain John Black. "Just a moment. Nobody gave any orders."

"But, sir—"

"Sir, nothing. How do we know what this is?"

"We know what it is, sir," said the chemist. "It's a small town with good air in it, surely."

"And it's a small town just like Earth towns," said Hinkston, the archæologist. "Incredible. It can't be, but it is."

Captain John Black looked at him, idly. "Do you think that the civilizations of two planets can progress at the same rate and evolve in the same way, Hinkston?"

"I wouldn't have thought so, sir."

Captain Black stood by the port. "Look out here. The geraniums. A specialized plant. That specific variety has only been known on Earth for fifty years. Think of the thousands of years of time it takes to evolve plants. Then tell me if it is logical that the Martians should have: one, leaded glass windows; two, cupolas; three, porch swings; four, an instrument that looks like a piano and probably is a piano; and, five, if you look closely, if a Martian composer would have published a piece of music titled, strangely enough, *Sweet Thames*. All of which suggests that we have a Thames river here on Mars!"

"It is quite strange, sir."

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" Strange, hell, it's absolutely impossible, and I suspect the whole ruddy set up. Something's wrong here, and I'm not leaving the ship until I know what it is."

" Oh, sir," said Petersen.

" Damn it," said Hinkston. " Sir, I want to investigate this at first hand. It may be that there are similar patterns of thought, movement, civilization on *every* planet in our system. We may be on the threshold of the greatest psychological and metaphysical discovery of our time, sir, don't you think ? "

" I'm willing to wait a moment," said Captain John Black.

" It may be, sir, that we are looking upon a phenomenon that, for the first time, would absolutely prove the existence of a God, sir."

" There are many people who are of good faith without such proof, Mr. Hinkston."

" I'm one myself, sir. But certainly a thing like this, out there," said Hinkston, " could not occur without divine intervention, sir. It fills me with such terror and elation I don't know whether to laugh or cry, sir."

" Do neither, then, until we know what we're up against."

" Up against, sir ? " enquired Petersen. " I see that we're up against nothing. It's a good, quiet, country town, much like the one I was born in, and I like the looks of it."

" When were you born, Petersen ? "

" In 1910, sir."

" That makes you fifty years old now, doesn't it ? "

" This being 1960, yes, sir."

" And you, Hinkston ? "

" 1920, sir. In Berkshire. And this looks good to me, sir."

" This couldn't be Heaven," said the captain, ironically. " Though, I must admit, it looks peaceful and cool, and pretty much like the South Riding, where I was born in 1915." He looked at the chemist. " The air's all right, is it ? "

" Yes, sir."

" Well, then, tell you what we'll do. Petersen, you and Hinkston and I will fetch ourselves out to look this town over. The other fourteen men will stay aboard ship. If anything untoward happens, lift the ship and get the hell out. Do you hear what I say, Craner ? "

" Yes, sir. The hell out we'll go, sir. Leaving *you ?* "

" A loss of three men's better than a whole ship. If something bad happens, get back to Earth and warn the next Rocket. That's Lingle's Rocket, I think, which will be completed and ready to take off some time around next Christmas. Tell him what he has to look out for. If there's something hostile about Mars we certainly want the next expedition to be well armed."

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" So are we, sir. We've got a regular arsenal with us."

" Tell the men to stand by the guns, then, as Petersen and Hinkston and I go out."

" Right, sir."

" Come along, Petersen, Hinkston."

The three men walked together, down through the levels of the ship.

It was a beautiful spring day. A robin sat on a blossoming apple tree and sang continuously. Showers of petal snow sifted down when the wind touched the apple tree, and the scent of blossom drifted upon the air. Somewhere in the town, somebody was playing the piano, and the music came and went, came and went, softly, drowsily. The song was *Beautiful Dreamer* Somewhere else, a gramophone, scratchy and faded, was hissing out a record of *Roamin' In The Gloamin'*, sung by Harry Lauder.

The three men stood outside the ship. The port closed behind them. At every window, a face pressed, looking out. The large metal guns pointed this way and that, ready.

Now the gramophone record being played was:

Oh give me a June night
The moonlight and you—

Petersen began to tremble. Hinkston did likewise.

Hinkston's voice was so feeble and uneven that the captain had to ask him to repeat what he had said. " I said, sir, that I think I have solved this, all of this, sir ! "

" And what is the solution, Hinkston ? "

The soft wind blew. The sky was serene and quiet and somewhere a stream of water ran through the cool caverns and tree-shadings of a ravine. Somewhere a horse and cart trotted and rolled by, bumping.

" Sir, it must be, it has to be, this is the *only* solution ! Rocket travel began to Mars in the years before the first World War, sir ! "

The captain stared at his archæologist. " No ! "

" But, yes, sir ! You must admit, look at all of this ! How else can you explain it—the houses, the lawns, the iron deer, the flowers, the pianos, the music ! "

" Hinkston, Hinkston, oh ! " And the captain put his hand to his face, shaking his head, his hand shaking now, his lips blue.

" Sir, listen to me." Hinkston took his elbow persuasively and looked up into the captain's face, pleading. " Say that there were some people in the year 1905, perhaps, who hated wars and wanted to get away from Earth and they got together some scientists, in secret, and built a rocket and came out here to Mars."

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"No, no, Hinkston."

"Why not? The world was a different place in 1905, they could have kept it a secret much more easily."

"But the work, Hinkston, the work of building a complex thing like a rocket, oh, no, no." The captain looked at his shoes, looked at his hands, looked at the houses, and then at Hinkston.

"And they came up here, and naturally the houses they built were similar to Earth houses, because they brought the cultural architecture with them, and here it is!"

"And they've lived here all these years?" said the captain.

"In peace and quiet, sir, yes. Maybe they made a few trips, to bring enough people here for one small town, and then stopped, for fear of being discovered. That's why the town seems so old-fashioned. I don't see a thing, myself, that is older than the year 1927, do you?"

"No, frankly, I don't, Hinkston."

"These are *our* people, sir. This is an English city!"

"That—that's right, too, Hinkston."

"Or maybe—just maybe—sir, rocket travel is older than we think. Perhaps it started in some part of the world hundreds of years ago, was discovered and kept secret by a small number of men, and they came to Mars, with only occasional visits to Earth over the centuries."

"You make it sound almost reasonable."

"It is, sir. It has to be. We have the proof here before us. All we have to do now is find some people and verify it!"

"You're right there, of course. We can't just stand here and talk. Did you bring your gun?"

"Yes, but we won't need it."

"We'll see about it. Come along, we'll ring that doorbell and see if anyone is home."

Their boots were deadened of all sound in the thick green grass. It smelled from a fresh mowing. In spite of himself, Captain John Black felt a great peace come over him. It had been thirty years since he had been in a small town, and the buzzing of spring bees on the air lulled and quieted him, and the fresh look of things was a balm to the soul.

Hollow echoes sounded from under the boards as they walked across the verandah and stood before the open door. Inside, they could see a bead curtain hung across the hall, and a crystal chandelier and a water-colour framed on one wall over a comfortable Morris Chair. The house smelled old, and of the attic, and infinitely comfortable. You could hear the tinkle of ice rattling in a water jug. In a distant kitchen, because of the heat of the day, someone

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was preparing a soft lemon drink.

Captain John Black rang the bell.

Footsteps, dainty and thin, came along the hall, and a kind-faced lady of some forty years, dressed in the sort of dress you might expect in the year 1909, peered out at them.

"Can I help you?" she asked.

"Beg your pardon," said Captain Black, uncertainly. "But we're looking for, that is, could you help us, I mean." He stopped. She looked out at him with dark wondering eyes.

"If you're selling something," she said, "I'm much too busy and I haven't time." She turned to go.

"No, *wait*," he cried bewilderedly. "What town is this?"

She looked him up and down as if he were crazy. "What do you mean, what town is it? How could you be in a town and not know what town it was?"

The captain looked as if he wanted to go and sit under a shady apple tree. "I beg your pardon," he said. "But we're strangers here. We're from Earth, and we want to know how this town got here and you got here."

"Are you census takers?" she asked.

"No," he said.

"What do you want, then?" she demanded.

"Well," said the captain.

"Well?" she asked.

"How long has this town been here?" he wondered.

"It was built in 1868," she snapped at them. "Is this a game?"

"No, not a game," cried the captain. "Oh, God," he said. "Look here. We're from Earth!"

"From *where?*" she said.

"From Earth!" he said.

"Where's that?" she said.

"From Earth," he cried.

"Out of the ground, do you mean?"

"No, from the planet Earth!" he almost shouted. "Here," he insisted, "come out on the porch and I'll show you."

"No," she said, "I won't come out there; you are all evidently quite mad from the sun."

Petersen and Hinkston stood behind the captain. Hinkston now spoke up. "You don't understand, ma'am," he said. "We came in a flying ship across space, among the stars. We came from the third planet from the sun, Earth, to this planet, which is Mars. *Now* do you see?"

"Mad from the sun," she said, taking hold of the door. "Go away now, before I call my husband who's upstairs taking a nap, and he'll beat you all with his fists."

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"But—" said Hinkston. "This is Mars, is it not?"

"This," explained the woman, as if she were addressing a child, "is England, on the Continent of Europe, on a place called the world, or, sometimes, the Earth. Go away, now. Goodbye!"

She slammed the door.

The three men stood before the door with their hands up in the air towards it, as if pleading with her to open it once more.

They looked at one another.

"Let's knock the door down," said Petersen.

"We can't," sighed the captain.

"Why not?"

"She didn't do anything she hadn't a right to do, did she? We're the strangers here. This is private property. Great Scott, Hinkston!" He went and sat down on the verandah.

"What, sir?"

"Did it ever strike you that, maybe, we got ourselves, somehow, some way, fouled up. And, by accident, came back and landed on Earth!"

"My word, you may be right!" And Hinkston sat down numbly and thought about it.

Petersen stood up in the sunlight. "How could we have done that?"

"I don't know, just let me think."

Hinkston said, "But we checked every mile of the way, and we saw Mars and our chronometers said so many miles gone, and we went past the moon and out, out into space, and here we are, on Mars. I'm sure we're on Mars, sir."

Petersen said, "But, suppose—just suppose—that, by accident, in space, in time, or something, we landed on a planet in space, in another time. Suppose this is Earth, thirty or fifty years ago? Maybe we got lost in the dimensions, do you think?"

"Oh, go away, Petersen."

"Are the men in the ship keeping an eye on us, Hinkston?"

"At their guns, sir."

Petersen went to the door, rang the bell. When the door opened again, he asked, "What year is this?"

"1926, of course!" cried the woman, furiously, and slammed the door again.

"Did you hear that?" Petersen ran back to them, wildly. "She said 1926! We *have* gone back in time! This *is* Earth!"

Petersen sat down, and the three men let the wonder and terror of the thought afflict them. Their hands stirred fitfully on their knees. The wind blew, nodding the locks of hair on their heads.

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The captain stood up. "I never thought it would be like this. It scares the life out of me. How can a thing like this happen?"

"Will anybody in the whole town believe us?" wondered Hinkston. "Are we playing around with something dangerous? Time, I mean. Shouldn't we just take off and go home?"

"No. We'll try another house."

They walked three houses down to a little white cottage under an oak tree. "I like to be as logical as I can get," said the captain. He nodded at the town. "How does this sound to you, Hinkston?

"Suppose, as you said originally, that rocket travel occurred years ago. And when the Earth people had lived here a number of years they began to get homesick for Earth. Homesickness so intense that it threatened the very foundations of their new life. What would you do, faced with such a problem? Supposing you had the absolute say-so in the place."

Hinkston thought. "Well, I think I'd rearrange the civilization on Mars so it resembled Earth more and more each day. If there was any way of reproducing every plant, every road and every lake, and even an ocean, I would do so. Then I would, by some vast crowd hypnosis, theoretically anyway, convince everyone in a town this size that this really *was* Earth, not Mars at all."

"Good enough, Hinkston. I think we're on the right track now. That woman in that house back there just *thinks* she's living on Earth. It protects her sanity. She and all the others in this town are the patients of the greatest experiment in migration and hypnosis you will ever lay your eyes on in your life."

"That's it, sir!" cried Petersen.

"Well," the captain sighed. "Now we're getting somewhere. I feel better. It all sounds a bit more logical now. This talk about time and going back and forth and travelling in time turns my stomach upside down. But, *this* way—" He actually smiled for the first time in a month. "Well, it looks as if we'll be fairly welcome here."

"Or, will we, sir?" said Petersen. "After all, these people came here to escape Earth. Maybe they won't be too happy to see us, sir. Maybe they'll try to drive us out or kill us?"

"We have superior weapons if that should happen. Anyway, all we can do is try. This house next now. Up we go."

But they had hardly crossed the lawn when Petersen stopped and looked off across the town, down the quiet, dreaming afternoon street. "Sir," he said.

"What is it, Petersen?" asked the captain.

"Oh, sir, *sir*, what I see, what I do see now before me, oh, oh—" said Petersen, and he began to cry like a child. His fingers came

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up, twisting and trembling, and his face was all wonder and joy and incredulity.

He sounded as if any moment he might go quite insane with happiness. He looked down the street and he began to run, stumbling awkwardly, falling, picking himself up, and running on, crying, "Oh, God, God, thank you, God! Thank you!"

"Don't let him get away!" The captain broke into a run.

Now Petersen was running at full speed, shouting. He turned into a yard half way down the little shady side street and leaped up upon the porch of a large green house with an iron rooster on the roof.

He was beating upon the door, shouting and crying when Hinkston and the captain ran up and stood in the yard.

The door opened, and Petersen, in a high wail of discovery and happiness, cried out, "Grandma! Grandpa!"

Two old people stood in the doorway, their faces lighting up.

"Albert!" Their voices piped and they rushed out to embrace and pat him on the back and move around him. "Albert, oh, Albert, it's been so many years! How you've grown, boy; how big you are. Oh, Albert, boy, how are you?"

"Grandma, Grandpa!" sobbed Albert Petersen. "It's good to see you! You look fine, fine! Oh, fine!" He held them, turned them round, kissed them, hugged them, cried on them, held them away again, blinking at the little old people. The sun was in the sky, the wind blew, the grass was green, the door stood open.

"Come in, lad, come in; there's lemonade for you—fresh, lots of it!"

"Grandma, Grandpa, good to see you! I've got friends down here! Here!" Petersen turned and waved wildly at the captain and Hinkston, who, all during the meeting on the verandah, had stood in the shade of a tree, holding on to each other. "Captain, captain, come up, come up; I want you to meet my grandparents!"

"Welcome!" said the old people. "Any friend of Albert's is ours, too! Don't stand there with your mouths open! Come on in!"

In the living room of the old house it was cool, and a grandfather clock ticked high and long and bronzed in one corner. There were soft pillows on large couches, and walls filled with books and a rug cut in a thick rose pattern and antimacassars pinned to furniture, and lemonade in the hand, cool on the thirsty tongue.

"Here's to our health." Grandma tipped her glass to her porcelain teeth.

"How long have you *been* here, Grandma?" said Petersen.

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"A good many years," she said, tartly. "Ever since we died."

"Ever since you what?" asked Captain John Black, putting his drink down.

"Oh, yes." Petersen looked at his captain. "They've been dead thirty years."

"And you *sit* there calmly!" cried the captain.

"Tush," said the old woman, and winked glitteringly at John Black. "Who are we to question what happens? Here we are. What's life, anyway? Who does what for why and where? All we know is here we are, alive again, and no questions asked. A second chance." She toddled over and held out her thin wrist to Captain John Black. "Feel." He felt. "Solid, aren't I?" she asked. He nodded. "You hear my voice, don't you?" she enquired. Yes, he did. "Well, then," she said in triumph, "why go around questioning?"

"Well," said the captain, "it's simply that we never thought we'd find a thing like this on Mars."

"And now you've found it, I dare say there's lots on every planet that'll show you God's infinite ways."

"Is this Heaven?" asked Hinkston.

"Nonsense, no. It's a world and we get a second chance. Nobody told us why. But then nobody told us why we were on Earth, either. That *other* Earth, I mean. The one you came from. How do we know there wasn't *another* before *that* one?"

"A good question," said the captain.

The captain stood up and slapped his hand on his leg in an offhand fashion. "We've got to be going. It's been nice. Thank you for the drinks."

He stopped. He turned and looked towards the door, startled.

Far away, in the sunlight, there was a sound of voices, a crowd, a shouting and a great hello.

"What's that?" asked Hinkston.

"We'll soon find out!" And Captain John Black was out the front door abruptly, running across the green lawn and into the street of the Martian town.

He stood looking at the ship. The ports were open and his crew were streaming out, waving their hands. A crowd of people had gathered, and in and through and among these people the members of the crew were running, talking, laughing, shaking hands. People did little dances. People swarmed. The rocket lay empty and abandoned.

A brass band exploded in the sunlight, flinging off a gay tune from upraised tubas and trumpets. There was a bang of drums and a shrill of fifes. Little girls with golden hair jumped up and

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down. Little boys shouted "Hooray!" And fat men passed around sixpenny cigars.

The mayor of the town made a speech. Then, each member of the crew, with a mother on one arm, a father or sister on the other, was spirited off down the street, into little cottages or big mansions, and doors slammed shut.

The wind rose in the clear spring sky and all was silent. The brass band had banged off round a corner, leaving the rocket to shine and dazzle alone in the sunlight.

"Abandoned!" cried the captain. "Abandoned the ship they did! I'll have their skins, by heaven! They had orders!"

"Sir," said Petersen. "Don't be too hard on them. Those were all old relatives and friends."

"That's no excuse!"

"Think how they felt, captain, seeing familiar faces outside the ship!"

"I would have obeyed orders! I would have—" The captain's mouth remained open.

Striding along the sidewalk under the Martian sun, tall, smiling, eyes blue, face tanned, came a young man of some twenty six years.

"John!" the man cried, and broke into a run.

"What?" said Captain John Black. He swayed.

"John, you old beggar, you!"

The man ran up and gripped his hand and slapped him on the back.

"It's you," said John Black.

"Of course, who'd you *think* it was!"

"Edward!" The captain appealed now to Petersen and Hinkston, holding the stranger's hand. "This is my brother Edward. Ed, meet my men, Petersen, Hinkston! My brother!"

They tugged at each other's hands and arms and then finally embraced. "Ed!" "John, you old scallywag, you!" "You're looking fine, Ed; but, Ed, what is this? You haven't changed over the years. You died, I remember, when you were twenty six, and I was nineteen—oh, God, so many years ago—and here you are; and, Lord, what goes on, what goes on?"

Edward Black gave him a brotherly knock on the chin. "Mother's waiting," he said.

"Mother?"

"And Dad, too."

"And Dad?" The Captain almost fell to earth as if hit upon the chest with a mighty weapon. He walked stiffly and awkwardly, out of co-ordination. He stuttered and whispered and talked only one or two words at a time. "Mother alive? Dad? Where?"

"At the old house on Oak Knoll Avenue."

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"The old house." The captain stared in delighted amazement. "Did you *hear* that, Hinkston?"

"I know it's hard for you to believe."

"But alive. Real."

"Don't I *feel* real?" The strong arm, the firm grip, the white smile. The light, curling hair.

Hinkston was gone. He had seen his own house down the street and was running for it. Petersen was grinning. "Now you understand, sir, what happened to everybody on the ship. They couldn't help themselves."

"Yes. Yes," said the captain, eyes shut. "Yes." He put out his hand. "When I open my eyes, you'll be gone." He opened his eyes. "You still here. Heavens above, Edward, you look fine!"

"Come along, lunch is waiting for you. I told Mother."

Petersen said, "Sir, I'll be here if you want me."

"What? Oh, fine, Petersen. Later, then."

Edward grabbed his arm and marched him. "You need support."

"I do. My knees are all funny. And my stomach's loose."

"There's the house. Remember it?"

"Remember it? What a question! I bet I can beat you to the door!"

They ran. The wind roared over Captain John Black's ears. The earth roared under his feet. He saw the golden figure of Edward Black pull ahead of him in the amazing dream of reality. He saw the house rush forward, the door swing open. "Beat you!" cried Edward, bounding up the steps. "I'm an old man," panted the captain, "and you're still young. But, then, you *always* beat me, I remember!"

In the doorway stood his Mother, pink and plump and bright. And behind her, pepper-grey, Dad, with his pipe in his hand.

"Mother, Dad!"

He ran up the steps like a child, to meet them.

It was a fine long afternoon. They finished lunch and they sat in the living room, and he told them all about his rocket and his being captain, and they nodded and smiled upon him; and Mother was just the same, and Dad bit the end off a cigar and lighted it in his old fashion.

Mother brought in some tea in the middle of the afternoon. Then there was a big turkey dinner at night, and time flowing on. When the drumsticks were sucked clean and lay brittle upon the plates, the captain leaned back in his chair and exhaled his deep contentment. Dad poured him a small glass of dry sherry. It

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was seven-thirty in the evening. Night was in all the trees and colouring the sky, and the lamps were halos of dim light in the gentle house. From all the other houses down the streets came sounds of music, pianos playing, laughter.

Mother put a record on the gramophone, and she and Captain John Black had a dance. She was wearing the same perfume, he remembered, from the summer when she and Dad had been killed in the train accident. She was very real in his arms as they danced lightly to the music.

"I'll wake in the morning," said the captain. "And I'll be in my rocket in space, and all this will be gone."

"No, no, don't think that," she cried, softly, pleadingly. "We're here. Don't question. God is good to us. Let's be happy."

The record ended with a circular hissing.

"You're tired, son," said Dad. He waved his pipe. "You and Ed go on upstairs. Your old bedroom is waiting for you."

"The old one?"

"The brass bed and all," laughed Edward.

"But I should report my men in."

"Why?" Mother was logical.

"Why? Well, I don't know. No reason, I suppose. No, none at all. What's the difference?" He shook his head. "I'm not being very logical these days."

"Good night, son." She kissed his cheek.

"'Night, Mother."

"Sleep tight, son." Dad shook his hand.

"You, too," he said.

"It's good to have you home."

"It's good to *be* home."

He left the land of cigar smoke and perfume and books and gentle light and climbed the stairs, talking, talking with Edward. Edward pushed a door open, and there was the yellow brass bed and the old shields from their schooldays, and a very musty tweed coat which he regarded with strange, muted affection.

"It's too much," he said faintly. "Like being in a thunder shower without an umbrella. I'm soaked to the skin with emotion. I'm numb. I'm tired."

"A night's sleep between cool clean sheets for you, my lad." Edward slapped wide the snowy linen and flounced the pillows. Then he put up a window and let the night blooming jasmine float in. There was moonlight and the sound of distant dancing and whispering.

"So this is Mars," said the captain, undressing.

"So this is Mars." Edward undressed in idle, leisurely moves,

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drawing his shirt off over his head, revealing bronzed shoulders and the good muscular neck.

The lights were out; they were in bed, side by side, as in the days, how many decades ago? The captain lolled and was nourished by the night wind pushing the lace curtains out upon the dark room air. Among the trees, upon a lawn, someone had cranked up a portable gramophone, and now it was playing softly, "*I'll be loving you, always, with a love that's true, always.*"

The thought of Anna came to his mind. "Is Anna here?"

His brother, lying straight out in the moonlight from the window, waited, and then said, "Yes. She's out of town. But she'll be here in the morning."

The captain shut his eyes. "I want to see Anna very much."

The room was square and quiet, except for their breathing. "Good night, Ed."

A pause. "Good night, John."

He lay peacefully, letting his thoughts float. For the first time the stress of the day was moved aside, all of the excitement was calmed. He could think logically now. It had all been emotion. The bands playing, the sight of familiar faces, the sick pounding of your heart. But—now . . .

How? He thought. How was all this made? And why? For what purpose? Out of the goodness of some kind God? Was God, then, really so fine and thoughtful of his children? How and why and what for?

He thought of the various theories advanced in the first heat of the afternoon by Hinkston and Petersen. He let all kinds of new theories drop in lazy pebbles down through his mind, as through a dark water, now turning, throwing out dull flashes of white light. Mars. Earth. Mother. Dad. Edward. Mars. Martians.

Who had lived here a thousand years ago on Mars? Martians? Or had this always been like this? Martians. He repeated the word quietly, inwardly.

He laughed out loud, almost. He had the most ridiculous theory, all of a sudden. It gave him a kind of chilled feeling. It was really nothing to think of, of course. Highly improbable. Silly. Forget it. Ridiculous.

But, he thought, just suppose. Just *suppose* now, that there were Martians living on Mars and they saw our ship coming and saw us inside our ship and hated us. Suppose, now, just for the hell of it, that they wanted to destroy us, as invaders, as unwanted ones, and they wanted to do it in a very clever way, so that we would be taken off guard. Well, what would the best weapon be

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that a Martian could use against Earth-men with atom weapons?

Telepathy, perhaps; hypnosis, memory and imagination.

Suppose all these houses weren't real at all, this bed not real, but only figments of my own imagination, given substance by telepathy and hypnosis by the Martians.

Suppose these houses are really some other shape, a Martian shape, but, by playing on my desires and wants, these Martians have made this seem like my old home town, my old house, to lull me out of my suspicions? What better way to fool a man than by his own emotions.

And suppose those two people in the next room, asleep, are not my mother and father at all. But two Martians, incredibly brilliant, with the ability to keep me under this dreaming hypnosis all of the time?

And that brass band today? What a clever plan it would be. First, fool Petersen, then fool Hinkston, then gather a crowd round the rocket ship and wave. And all the men in the ship, seeing mothers, aunts, uncles, sweethearts, dead ten, twenty years ago, naturally, disregarding orders, would rush out and abandon the ship.

What more natural? What more unsuspecting? What more simple? A man doesn't ask too many questions when his mother is suddenly brought back to life; he's much too happy. And the brass band played and everybody was taken off to private homes. And here we all are, tonight, in various houses, in various beds, with no weapons to protect us, and the rocket lies in the moonlight, empty. And wouldn't it be horrible and terrifying to discover that all of this was part of some great clever plan by the Martians to divide and conquer us, and kill us.

Some time during the night, perhaps, my brother here on this bed, will change form, melt, shift, and become a one-eyed, green and yellow-toothed Martian. It would be very simple for him just to turn over in bed and put a knife into my heart. And in all those other houses down the street a dozen other brothers or fathers suddenly melting away and taking out knives and doing things to the unsuspecting, sleeping men of Earth.

His hands were shaking under the covers. His body was cold. Suddenly it was not a theory. Suddenly he was very afraid. He lifted himself in bed and listened. The night was very quiet. The music had stopped. The wind had died. His brother (?) lay sleeping beside him.

Very carefully he lifted the sheets, rolled them back. He slipped from bed and was walking softly across the room when his brother's voice said, "Where are you going?"

"What?"

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His brother's voice was quite cold. "I said, where do you think you're going?"

"For a drink of water."

"But you're not thirsty."

"Yes, yes, I am."

"No, you're not."

Captain John Black broke and ran across the room. He screamed. He screamed twice.

He never reached the door.

In the morning, the brass band played a mournful dirge. From every house in the street came little solemn processions bearing long boxes, and along the sun-filled street, weeping and changing, came the grandmothers and grandfathers and mothers and sisters and brothers, walking to the churchyard, where there were open holes dug freshly and new tombstones installed.

Seventeen holes in all, and seventeen tombstones. Three of the tombstones said, CAPTAIN JOHN BLACK, ALBERT PETERSEN, and SAMUEL HINKSTON.

The mayor made a little sad speech, his face sometimes looking like the mayor, sometimes looking like something else.

Mother and Father Black were there, with Brother Edward, and they cried, their faces melting now from a familiar face into something else.

Grandpa and Grandma Petersen were there, weeping, their faces also shifting like wax, shivering as a thing does in waves of heat on a summer day.

The coffins were lowered. Somebody murmured about "the unexpected and sudden deaths of seventeen fine men during the night—"

Earth was shovelled in on the coffin tops.

After the funeral the brass band slammed and banged back into town and the crowd stood around and waved and shouted as the rocket was torn to pieces and strewn about and blown up.

* * *

HEAD ON

A timid woman boarded a local train at Walton-on-Thames.

"Does this train stop at the Waterloo Terminus?" she demanded anxiously of a harassed looking porter.

"Well, ma'am," he said wearily, "if it don't, there'll be one hell of a crash!"

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THE CULPRIT

This was no hole and corner affair

by H. WARINGTON SMYTH

THERE is no more cheery beast to be fellow-traveller with than the elephant. His small twinkling eye is full of mischief, and his great broad mouth seems curved to the shape of silent laughter. In his youth especially he is irrepressible. In Siam and the Lao States we generally had three or four little ones travelling with their mothers. They were four or five feet high, and weighed some fifteen hundredweight.

When we camped they charged about the camp with delighted grunts and squeals, pushing their trunks into our bedding and belongings, and withdrawing them with astonished snorts. Sitting by the camp-fire there would be a rustle behind you, and next instant a rough hairy little trunk came round your shoulder, and if you happened to be munching a banana or a biscuit, it was grabbed and gone in an instant. If you were smoking a tough, excellent, but black Burmese cheroot, there was a snort of indignation. You would turn round to see three or four dashing away with mutual expressions of disgust, the little fellow who had come against that nasty hot part of the cheroot cooling the end of his trunk in his mouth, just like a schoolboy who has burnt his finger.

Like boys at school, too, they used to have shunting matches. Two of them would put their heads down and shove. They would get their whole weight into it by degrees, their strong little hind-legs at a good angle out behind, their trunks coiled carefully up under their mouths to be out of danger. The other two would be looking on, one swinging his trunk in a contemplative manner, the other solemnly scratching himself with a bit of a fallen branch, both hugely pleased and emitting curious rumblings, as if to say, " Go it, you fellows ! " The two performers soon began to breathe heavily, and then weight would tell ; the smaller began to give way, and then suddenly he would break off and go full speed away through the trees. If his pursuer followed him, he would try and make a flank attack from ambush, and would charge with a terrific squeal.

The most successful ruse I ever saw one of these youngsters bring off was when I was crossing the central range of the Malay Peninsula.

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I was riding a pleasant mannered old tusker, and just in front on the narrow jungle-track marched a mother elephant and her babe. Behind came our whole caravan of elephants, stretching away out of sight among the trees. The children often romped along together, and just behind the babe in front of us there was walking sedately another young one, named "Deng" from his reddish bristles, a little older and bigger, which had left its mother to talk and play with its fellow.

Presently as we climbed along a vast mountainside with the interminable forest far above us on the right, and going deep into the dense *nullahs* below on the left of our narrow track, we heard exclamations from mahouts behind and angry elephant snorts. Then came tearing along past all the big elephants a third and small dusty creature running and pushing its way. My own mahout burst into abuse as this impudent little creature pushed by my elephant on the inside. My elephant looked round and stopped, doubtless to ask what this blank Master Chom meant by these ill manners.

But without any more ado Master Chom pushed up alongside his playmate Deng just in front of us and on his inside. He walked beside him for some way, and caressed him in a friendly manner with his trunk; then suddenly he turned, and with head down and fore-shoulders well forward, he gave poor Deng a running butt right in the side, and sent him toppling and rolling over the edge of the mountain-path.

And then the trouble began. Poor Deng lost his footing and rolled off sideways, and rolled and pitched, carrying away small trees and saplings as he went down some hundreds of feet. I thought the poor little beast would be killed; but the whole time he emitted a series of heart-rending shrieks. He was finally brought up in a mass of débris by a big tree-trunk.

I took a hasty look at the culprit Chom, and could not help laughing at his appearance. He stood on the edge quite solemnly looking down at the unfortunate Deng, swinging the tip of his trunk from side to side with an air of complete delight and satisfaction.

Now commenced a perfect uproar down the lines of elephants behind, the shouting of mahouts, the angry high-note trumpetings of angry creatures. "It is the mother comes," laconically said my mahout as he began to bang my mount on the head to try and get him on the inside of the track safe against the mountain. There was no attempt to go forward. All the animals had stopped dead and would not move on.

Pushing, snorting, and emitting short anxious trumpetings came Deng's mother. When she got abreast of us there was hardly room for her to pass, and the two huge bodies crashed together like the

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collision of two ships at sea. Her mahout was doing all he could to stop her, without the very least effect.

She looked down for one moment at where her offspring lay far below whimpering sadly; then putting out her fore-legs straight in front, she went down on her hind knees, and so over the edge, and away down into the depths.

It all took no time. The men wanted to get the *howdah* and gear off her back, to get their long rattan ropes ready, and generally set about the thing in a leisurely manner. But Deng's mother would have no delay. All we could do now was to wait and see what she would do. I had a curious feeling of our own smallness, and that the old elephant's wisdom was probably greater than ours, as was her strength.

She got down without injury, though at times she seemed to be taking the whole mountainside with her. I was anxious, too, for her mahout. He, with his jungle sense, knew it was no use protesting further. He lay on the great neck of his charge, well over behind her great ear to avoid the branches and undergrowth as she swept down the mountainside, while he whispered soft encouragements and cautions.

My mahout said, "The old man's all right; they know one another."

When she reached about the level of the mass of débris which marked the resting-place of her little son, we saw the creature make a great effort, and by some means utilising the obstruction of two big trees, she managed to arrest the downward avalanche of earth, rock, undergrowth, and young trees which had gone with her, and which was increasing in volume every moment. Presently as the dust subsided somewhat, we could see the animal working patiently towards the goal, building a sure foothold for each foot until at last she was standing on a firm platform of well-trodden earth and undergrowth within reach of the still whimpering Deng.

He stopped his whimpering when he felt his mother's trunk caressing him. And then we watched a wonderful thing—men and elephants in a long line on the narrow track looking down into the dark foliage with its splashes of sunlight here and there. The mother elephant caressed the little creature all over, and cleared off the saplings and branches that were in his way; then slowly and grumblingly tried to get him upright as she seemed satisfied no bones were broken.

It was a difficult job, and now and then poor Deng would start whimpering again. But at last he was sitting up facing our mountainside, trembling as a frightened elephant does. He was then caressed and cajoled with that loving trunk for minutes together; then he twined his own doleful little trunk round it, as if reassured.

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Now came the most difficult part of the mother elephant's undertaking—the climb up to the path overhead where we all stood. Deng's mother had no doubts as to the next thing to be done, and deliberately put her huge forehead under his little behind, and with short frantic pushes shoved him up the mountain steepness.

Deng struggled with his feet, and now and then would nearly fall over to one side or the other; but always that broad forehead was there to hold him up, and now and then that kind trunk would go all over his little body again, and each time he grew calmer and was game for another struggle upwards. I don't know how long it took. It seemed like an hour. Often I thought they would both lose their feet and go rolling away together. And all the time there sat that old mahout talking encouragingly into the old creature's ear, but leaving her to do it her own way.

At last they stood once more upon the track, both bathed in sweat and panting like two huge locomotives. And then I admired the understanding of our mahouts. "We will go on, Nai, and leave them to be together for a little."

So carefully, on the outside, all the elephants stepped one by one, and we left the two trembling creatures—the little one standing close in under its mother's great body, her trunk still going over it; and the old mahout still sitting quietly on her neck chewing his bit of betel-nut.

But when we got to camp it was decided that Chom must be brought up for punishment. No hole-and-corner nursery affair this, but a full-parade court martial. The evidence was, unfortunately, overwhelming, and as President of the Court it was my painful duty to pronounce judgment. This was carried out at noon in the presence of a full muster of all the elephants, young and old, and it was evident that even the younger ones were greatly impressed. The prisoner was to stand in the hot noontide sun for an hour, with a big bunch of bananas just out of reach before him, and in front of the whole camp.

I felt sorry for the little culprit, looking so bored and crestfallen; and to make matters worse, he was harangued at length by his mamma's mahout, a boy of about fourteen, whose father and grandfather had been mahouts to the same elephant. Leaning against the mother elephant's front leg, his glistening brown limbs looking like polished teak in the sun, the small mahout fired off the worst vituperation he was capable of.

"You are no elephant," said he, "but a little black pig running about in a Chinaman's pig-sty: that's what you are like. Your mother here hides her head in shame at the baby pig which she has produced. Stand there in the sun, eat nothing, and you shall beg

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pardon and salaam to Deng's mahout when he comes in."

Poor Chom's head drooped lower and lower; now and then his little eyes looked up our way for a moment and twinkled, as if asking for a little sympathy. We got up from our semicircle. "The mahout speaks truth," we said solemnly, and walked away.

Chom stood pouring trunkfuls of dust over his back at intervals, lifting first one foot and then the other off the ground, looking sadly out upon the unforgiving world with his little eyes, and now and then emitting a rumble and a sigh which shook the earth, whenever his eye lit upon the banana bunch which he might not touch.

So he waited in the dazzling sun while his mamma was enjoying crunching up fourteen-inch bamboos in a neighbouring bamboo-brake, every scrunch being audible a quarter of a mile off.

The last scene was when Deng arrived trotting beside his mother. Both had quite recovered. Chom's elaborate salaam and look of contrition were not even noticed by Deng's parent; but Deng in a most engaging and forgiving manner went straight up to Chom and gave him a butt in the side. Then they were allowed to go off together; and in a few minutes the irate voice of the Siamese cook, swearing in admirable English, announced that their trunks had found out the big rice bowl and the whole contents had been spilt. Neither sticks nor abuse from anybody but their own mahouts, who were hastily sent for, had any effect in driving them away until the last crumbs of rice had been picked up in their trunks and safely deposited down their capacious throats.

* * *

OVERHEARD

When Sir John Ross was Lord Chancellor of Ireland, he attended an art exhibition in his official capacity. The prize exhibit was a huge canvas entitled "The Dance of Salome." The Chancellor overheard two of Belfast's female art connoisseurs discussing its merits.

"What in the divil is this thing supposed to be, Maria?" demanded the first.

Maria consulted her catalogue, and answered, "It says here it's Solomon dancing for Herod."

"He niver done it, Maria," announced the first one firmly.

"Sure and he must have," said Maria tartly. "Else he couldn'ta been photaygraphed!"

Told by BENNETT CERF

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SWEET O' THE YEAR

Now is the Time

My beloved spake, and said unto me,
Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.
For, lo, the winter is past,
The flowers appear on the earth.;
The time of the singing of birds is come,
And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land ;
The fig tree ripeneth her green figs,
And the vines are in blossom,
Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

The Song of Solomon

For Spring Excursions

The lovely day had seduced him when he woke. He blinked gratefully at the golden light and drank his morning tea. The sun had caught familiar surfaces, edging their commonplace with gaiety. Silver-backed brushes, mahogany chest, a row of gleaming shoes, a vase of daffodils, a brass hot-water can—how merry they looked because the April sun was on them! Eddy stretched to a yawn, and then sprang out of bed. He smiled at his own pleasant face obstructing the branch of plane tree in the mirror. He smiled at the memory of last night's Madeira and last night's companionship and though he waked alone felt close-companioned still as he bathed and dressed in the warming sun.

Soon, modishly dressed he wandered through the town. He bought a flower for his buttonhole; he ordered neckties, and as he found himself in Jermyn Street thought it no harm to have himself fitted for new boots. He called on his vintner merely to gossip, and yielded there to a case of Clicquot and some Napoleon brandy. He refrained from buying a new hat. He kept humming "La Belle Hélène" and he lunched at noon with the companion of last night.

A sweet allegro movement. And then suddenly here was Caroline, without as much as by-your-leave. Life must be adjusted for her. Eddy pulled a wry face.

What scenes and shindies were in sight, what tears and adjurations, what bluffings to the world, what lies and family alarums! All for a lovely goose who didn't know her day was over!

KATE O'BRIEN, *Without My Cloak*

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And April Showers

Down come white rains, down in down
Spiderfalls of parachute rain
The feather rains in moccasin shoes
To make a pillowed land. Frost
Spans a lake in a night and rigs
The trees with cables by the morning.

Now to jump a lodging in the muffled
Town and canter with the smoking
Hounds of spring through the hollow . . .

And now on tightrope ponds to try
A catsfoot on taut ponds ringing,
Describe a name on panes flashing
In arabesques on diamond ponds
Bringing out from water cocoons
A fluent frieze of threaded joy.

Then through the portal south to gallop
Icicle-spurred and with open mouth
Since days are pensioned and this is
The wanded world and the signal month.

JOHN PRICHARD

Even Minor Alarums

The next trouble will be that your assessment form for the current tax-year arrives, asking for an exorbitant sum out of your small income, which you can ill spare, and, in fact, which you probably do not possess. Again, take no notice. You will receive presently plenty of other forms, similar in content, though they change in colour as time goes on and as the impatience of the publican increases ; I am told that it is safe to ignore them all until they turn slate-blue. When this occurs, it is advisable to call on your local publican and tell him that you cannot pay him at present, as you are living on an overdraft which your bank will not increase, but that you expect in a month or two to sell a book, or some newspaper articles, or a motor bicycle, or what not, and will then endeavour to oblige him. If he still demands a cheque, give him a postdated one and stop it before the date arrives. But there is one true and melancholy fact about taxes ; you will have to pay them eventually, put off the evil day as you may.

ROSE MACAULAY, *A Casual Commentary*

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But at the Sign of the Dragon

I called Exalted Virtue and asked him if that gifted needlewoman the Mother of Little Lu would be so kind as to mend a glove of mine. Exalted Virtue told me that it would not be possible on that particular day.

I asked: "Why not?"

"Because today is the second day of the Second Moon. The Dragon lifts his head. If one moves the needles, one might prick his eyes."

It was a certain warm feeling in the air that gave me the explanation of this cryptic sentence. In my courtyards the marble flags glowed in the sunlight, and the lilac bushes had swollen buds. In the sheltered corners of my garden the wild prunus was flowering; soon the cherry, the pear, and the almond trees would follow suit. The woodpecker had arrived from the south. His green plumage heralded the green that would come later—much later—on the branches and on the lawns.

The Dragon lifting his head is a first sign of spring. There is a play by Wedekind, "Awakening of Spring" which is the story of a very young girl who comes to grief because she does not know enough about life. This could not have happened had she been brought up in China. In the East, when the Dragon opens his eyes, it is in a world that knows all there is to know about him, and a bit more.

And good housewives are careful.

DANIELE VARÈ, *The Maker of Heavenly Trousers*

Sing Tirra Lirra

When daffodils begin to peer,
With heigh! the doxy, over the dale,
Why, then comes in the sweet o' the year;
For the red blood reigns in the winter's pale.

The white sheet bleaching on the hedge,
With heigh! the sweet birds, O, how they sing!
Doth set my pugging tooth on edge;
For a quart of ale is a dish for a king.

The lark, that tirra-lirra chants,
With, heigh! with, heigh! the thrush and the jay,
Are summer songs for me and my aunts,
While we lie tumbling in the hay.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

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CASE OF MISS WARING

Not strictly textbook, perhaps, but it certainly was an ingenious theory

by NEIL PATERSON

CASEBOOK. Working Notes. *Strictly Private.*
January 6. R. G. Birdman to see me today. Wants me to examine fiancée, dancer apparently (ballet). See name in Appts. Book. R.G. interrupted during session with F. Samson says she told him I was engaged, but that he insisted on walking into my room. Particularly irritating, because I was on the point of beginning transference with F., who is one of the most difficult cases I have had. And, of course, after Birdman came blundering in, she closed up like a clam.

January 10. Birdman again at two p.m. He hasn't changed much in the past twelve years. Fatter, of course, and more pompous than ever. Obviously prosperous. Told me something about a legacy, and seemed surprised that I didn't know. Very friendly, repeatedly calling me Johnny. Why? Never did at school as far as I can remember.

Attitude objectionable, but so unconscious that I didn't bother to pull him up. Saying, in effect, you and I know very well that psycho-analysis is a racket, but just in case there may sometimes be something in it, I want you to give my fiancée a course of treatment; and, mind you, it must be the best, the Very First Class treatment for V.I.Ps.

I explained carefully that I could not accept his fiancée until I had examined her and decided whether she was a suitable subject for analysis, and that if I did so decide, the treatment would be an orthodox course, the same as everyone else got, and that this course would last for several months and might extend over years. R.G. slightly deflated. "You must take her," he said. "It's vital. You see, I think she's a schizo."

"I beg your pardon," I said.

"You know," he said. "A schizophrenic. I'm almost certain of it."

I was amused, but said nothing. R.G. has obviously been

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reading up his psychiatry, but has not read quite enough. If the girl really is a schizo, I won't touch the case, of course.

"I'm damnably worried," R.G. said.

Went on to tell me that they were to be married this year, but as the girl (Jill) is young (twenty one), he is quite prepared to wait. At the same time hinted pretty broadly that in view of the fact that we went to school together, he expected me to curtail "the cure." ("I know how reluctant you chaps are to let a patient go, but if you make a quick job of Jill you won't lose by it financially, if you know what I mean.")

I knew only too well what he meant. What a bounder the fellow is! Decided definitely not to accept the girl and therefore did not press him for her symptoms. Strikes me now as odd, however, that he did not volunteer symptoms.

As he was leaving, asked me not to mention to fiancée—whom I am seeing in half an hour—that he (R.G.) had called a second time. Miss Samson heard the last few minutes of our conversation at the door, and treated me to the smile matronly and sympathetic as I returned to my room. Samson is no mean psychologist.

Jill Waring. Native of Trannington, Leith. Member of Corps de Ballet, now at Queen's.

Only child. Age twenty two (Check: Birdman told me twenty one, and this may be a straw in the wind).

5 ft. 5 in. approx. Wt., 8st. 3 lbs. (apparently constant).

Good appearance, neat and tidy, figure noticeable. Brunette. Blue eyes. Pupils large, but similar. Hair up. Good head. Slightly distended nostrils. Carefully and, I think, expensively dressed. Very attractive.

Handshake normal. Temperature normal.

Headache and sleeplessness. "Not concentrating quite so well as I used to." Persistent "neuralgia" (!) in left thigh. These are the only symptoms meantime admitted.

No defect of attention or lack of coherence in speech.

Visual and aural perception normal.

Reasoning and judgment—normal reaction to Franz's advanced test.

Appears willing to co-operate, although obviously on the defensive.

Name of family doctor: Brown-Hughes, 186, Clinton Gdns. Tel: GAR 4217.

Slight tendency to frown and odd occasional uplift of eyes. (Conjunctivitis ?) Arrange eye test.

Smoked three cigarettes in half an hour. Holds cigarette in left hand.

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Crossed and uncrossed legs repeatedly. Tendency to carelessness with skirt, which may be due to stage casualness, but which does not accord with general air of fastidiousness.

Took writing sample before she left, primarily to get gloves off. Good strong backhand. Hands large for a woman. Long sensitive fingers. After we had shaken hands I tried experiment of G.H.C.'s. Don't like this sort of thing, as it savours of a bag of tricks, but can be useful. I said, " Do you always have a secretion of sweat on the palm of your hand ? " and she said, " Yes, usually," very quickly. The interesting thing was that I had not detected sweat.

Too early for any conclusions. I know nothing yet, but interesting, because one seldom gets an opportunity, as seems probable in this case, of *preventive* psycho-therapy.

January 11. Rang Brown-Hughes early evening. Knew I was going to have trouble the moment I heard his voice. And I did. I understood that he had recently given the girl a thorough examination, and I asked him if he would be good enough to give me the facts.

B.-H. : What facts ?

Self : Oh, just the usual. In the first place, is there anything organically wrong ?

B.-H. : I don't keep records of these routine examinations.

Self : Well, can you remember if there was any abnormality ?

B.-H. : Of course I remember. There was none.

Self : What about the patient's history ?

B.-H. : What about it ?

Self : Will you give me an outline, please ?

B.-H. : What do you want to know ?

Self : Everything of interest. Beginning at the beginning, what about the birth ? Can you remember if there was any difficulty ; if it was a forceps birth, for instance ?

B.-H. : Good heavens above, etc.

Self : All right, Doctor, I just thought you might remember. How about childhood illnesses ? Meningitis, concussion, fainting attacks, rheumatic fever, chorea ?

B.-H. : None of 'em.

Self : And the family history ?

B.-H. : Mother was all right.

Self : What about the father ?

B.-H. : So-so.

Self : What do you mean by that ?

B.-H. : Oh . . . normal.

Self : And the grandparents ?

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B.-H.: Before my time.

Self: I heard the grandfather was inclined to be eccentric.

B.-H.: Well, that's one way of putting it.

Self: (exhausted) Look here, I'd like to come and see you. When could I come? This is important, Doctor.

B.-H.: It's not important to me.

Self: It's important to your patient.

We argued about this for several minutes, B.-H. becoming profane, and I had to turn on my big guns, bringing in the names of Profs. H. and S. and stating that I would have to hold him responsible for any deterioration in the patient's condition.

"The patient has no condition," he shouted. But in the end he gave me an hour next week. "Provided you're qualified. I won't see you unless you're qualified. Are you?"

"I have the same degrees as you have yourself, Doctor," I said. And I forbore to add that I also had two others. I don't want to score points off the miserable old sod. I want facts.

I should be amused, I suppose. G.H.C. would make a wonderful story of it. Blimp to end all Drs. Blimp. The trouble is there are so many B.-H.s. The G.P.s should be solidly behind us, and they're not. The specialists are just as bad. Obstruction all the way. How can we possibly get results when the profession as a whole is concerned only to prove us charlatans, and God knows that's easy enough.

I'm tired tonight, and I'm worried about V. Talking far too much today. I think he is going to have another breakdown, which will make his son's gratitude seem excessive, to say the least of it. Trouble is, I sent the two hundred and fifty pounds to the clinic, so can't very well return it to him.

Birdman rang and told me he'd rung twice already this afternoon, but couldn't get me. I snapped, telling him I had other patients as well as his fiancée. Birdman is going to be a nuisance. Told him I didn't know yet whether I'd be able to help her or not, but that I expected to be able to say definitely after two or three sessions whether I'd accept her as a patient.

Birdman then became very inarticulate and wordy, and I gathered that he was in the process of telling me something. He went round and round the point. "I hardly like to tell you on the telephone," he said at last.

"Well, don't tell me."

"I might as well," he said. "I don't suppose there'll be anybody listening. You see, it's like this, she's . . .well, I don't know any other way to put it, Johnny . . . She's man crazy!"

This case is going to be trickier than I thought.

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January 20. Went to the ballet again last night. COTILLON. Think I am getting the hang of the thing. Lack of story bothers me a bit, though.

January 28. I spent all last evening going over Samson's verbatim notes of my week's work, with especial reference to V. Not concentrating perfectly. There is something escaping me with regard to Jill W., and this is lying at the back of my mind and coming between me and my insight into V.

Can't make up my mind about this verbatim business. I know it isn't recommended, and I know all the reasons why, but I'm sure that in my case it has done far more good than harm to have someone in the next room taking a word for word record. It would ruin my relationship with any patient who realized it, of course, but I can rule out the possibility of a patient ever finding out. What it does to Samson really doesn't matter. Samson is just the stooge. What *does* matter is what it does to me.

Does it tighten me up, can it possibly communicate itself in some degree through me to the patient? I have felt recently that I am coming against stronger resistances than ever before, and I must consider whether this is due to some positiveness in myself, brought about by the fact that I know Samson is overhearing. Again, I have to bear in mind that I have picked up a great deal that I would otherwise have missed by studying Samson's notes.

I find I can now re-experience both visually and aurally every minute of each sitting. Tiring but valuable. E.g. Jill's "The reason I didn't want to put my hair up was because then I would have to wash my ears every day. I didn't want to be so aware of them."

Self: But you wear your hair up now.

Jill: Oh, *yes*.

It was the inflexion that gave that answer such significance, and I quite missed it the first time . . .

Another danger about the verbatim method is that it further promotes my tendency to lay too much stress on the spoken word. Speech is important, of course. Foremost medium of communication, basis of all my work, etc., etc., but it's not all-important, and I know that I am sometimes misled by attributing shades of meaning that are not intended or even understood by the patients. I must not be so damned subtle about words.

Find that I now tend to reproduce even personal conversations verbatim. E.g. my conversation with L. as I drove her home last night. Found myself playing it off afterwards in bed, like a gramophone record. No harm in this, of course, but what *is* dangerous is that in those repeat performances I am lifting the

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needle at every second word and subjecting it to far too close a scrutiny. People do not use words precisely, and by interpreting words too precisely I am apt to misinterpret the speaker's meaning, which is, of course, all that matters. N.B. this.

Jill W. at three p.m. Shadows under both eyes.

Still exhibiting all the signs of resistance. Keeps turning to look at me. Asks questions, and when I do not answer pouts most disarmingly. Reaction time poor at free association. Started off by saying, "I have nothing at all to say today. I feel empty."

I waited, and when nothing more came I said, "I think I noticed you smoothing your hair back over your forehead. Why did you do this?"

"Because a few hairs had come loose."

"All right," I said. "Start from there. Free association. Hair."

"Hair," she said (three seconds). "Tights are absurdly dear. I had to pay six guineas for a pair of chequered tights for COTILLON, and the same thing exactly is advertised in Benjie's prewar catalogue at twenty-seven and sixpence."

Nothing more.

"Benjie," I said.

"Twenty-seven and sixpence."

I waited for fully five seconds. "What is the connection between hair and tights?"

"I have hairy legs," she said. "Haven't you noticed?"

Nothing more.

"Why don't you ever reply?" she asked, sitting up. "Why don't you try to help me? You just sit there where I can't even see you, and listen and watch me. I feel you watching me all the time. It's horrid. Why don't you do something positive to help?"

Promising outburst, but no more.

"I'll tell you why, Miss Waring," I said. "The answer is very simple. I don't know how to help you." And I reminded her of the explanation of analysis which I had given her when she first came to me.

I stressed again that in the early stages it was she who had to do all the work, and that latterly it was possible that I might be able to take a more active part; but that meantime, if the analysis was going to be successful, she must break down her resistance and be honest with me.

"You're really the doctor," I said. (Foolish. Have remarked this before. *No* metaphors to patients). "I'm just the instrument . . ."

"You're the knife," she said.

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"All right, go on from there. Free association. Knife."

"Knife. Scalpel. Dissection. I do not want to be dissected." (Note: do not. Normally says, don't). "Not today. I'm not in the mood. I had a bad night. I don't want any more today. Anyway, I feel all right. There's nothing really the matter with me, is there? Is there, Doctor?"

Said nothing.

"You might as well answer, because I'm really not going to endure a session today. I feel fine. You don't think there's really anything the matter, do you?"

Had that one many times before, and it's a teaser. Say you don't think there's much the matter and it's two to one chance on resentment. Say you think there's something the matter and you increase anxiety neurosis. Textbook answer is, "I don't know. That's what we are trying to find out."

She was putting on her gloves. "Anyway," she said. "I meant to tell you we have an early rehearsal today. And you still haven't answered my question. You don't think there's anything much the matter with me, do you?"

"Yes," I said. "I do."

"You're right, of course," she said. Thought she was going to cry, and that might have helped. She didn't, though. "You're always right," she said, after a pause. "What am I going to do?"

I said, "You're going to lie back and relax for a moment or two and then we'll begin again."

"All right," she said, "if you'll pull down the blind a little further."

(The blind again. We've had the blind at least once a sitting.)

Now take the above. Knife stuff on the surface grist to the mill. Good phallic phenomena. Only, too good, and misleading if disassociated from patient's attitude and expression which was then, and is, repeatedly mischievous, this despite the fact that a few minutes previously she was showing a genuine emotion. Am almost sure that this is not negative transference or even initial resistance in the ordinary sense. This is not id work, but pure ego. Deliberate obstructionalism.

And that brings me to a big problem which has been present from the beginning and which I must presently face up to. Am I right to continue with this patient? Is this, perhaps, a case where she is too conscious of my personality to be able to use me as a father confessor? Am I too young for her?

Telephone. I knew immediately who it was from Samson's face. "Second time this afternoon," Samson said primly. L., of course. Wants me to join her at N.B. on Friday. Told her I couldn't possibly come down till Saturday, as arranged, and

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reminded her that I was going to the theatre with the B.s. L. becoming possessive. Why is it that I don't resent this? Is it because I'm not particularly good with women in a private capacity that I find their occasional possessiveness flattering to my ego? Or just the normal masc. vanity?

February 7. Long session with R.G.B. Needlessly painful because of the parentheses and rationalizations with which he envelops every relevant fact. Mind is full of cotton wool, and I was shown most of it. Thinking always, of course, from the conventional, moral point of view, and apparently incapable of ever understanding that this is a cancer like any other, and that I am no more interested in his moral attitude than any other surgeon would be, performing a major operation. And a job like this is a major operation.

Interview extremely painful for us both, and the sum total that emerged was hardly enough to make a bishop blush. Nevertheless, I suppose to R.G.B. his behaviour seems "pretty shameful" (favourite expression), and, if his facts are correct, note the *if*, and if I am right in thinking also that he toned them down for my consumption, then there is a genuine psycho-neurosis and a pathological state which certainly should be treated by psycho-therapy.

Why do I have to argue all this out? I think because I am coming to the same point again: of course there's psychogenic trouble here, and I've known it all along. The question is, am I competent to relieve it?

These *ifs*. Can't quite correlate R.G.B.'s version of Jill with my own. Have gone into this thoroughly with myself and am now satisfied that my reluctance to take R.G.B.'s stories at face value is not due to the fact that I do not wish to believe them, but due solely to my conviction that he is not a reliable witness on such matters, being himself morbidly erotic. E.g. he asked me today whether he could attend with Jill, and when I said no which, of course, he expected, he asked if he could "listen-in." I said that he couldn't, whereupon bright boy suggested that if it was a matter of the walls being too thick, he could arrange for a house decorator to do the necessary job overnight. He was about to tell me how handsomely he proposed to pay me for this little concession when I shut him up.

"I know," he said. "Everything that you've said is true. It's just that I'm so damned jealous, Johnny."

To revert, I accept what R.G.B. has told me about Jill's erotism in a general way, but not in detail. It doesn't match up with my own observations, and I am satisfied that I am not concerned with the fact that it offends my instincts.

Although personally I consider R.G.B. unwholesome, I have

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had clear evidence that Jill does not. On the contrary, she is in love with him. Why is another question, of course, and may have bearing (may well), but I haven't enough data to go into that yet. G.H.C. would probably illustrate the falcon and its feeding place, and that possibility must be borne in mind, but I'm rejecting it now (with reservations) on account of its slickness.

Don't like it. Don't like any of it. Rationalization not unlike R.G.B.'s. Although I don't accept his details I am, nevertheless, almost sure that he suppressed certain facts, and that these facts may be more damning (in his view) than any of the others.

Point recurs *ad infinitum*. Is this a case for me?

February 15. Decided today, after much thought, to discontinue Samson's verbatim notes in Jill's case. Decided also that it would not be advisable to discontinue notes with any of my other patients. Whole point is, verbatim notes have been helping me with the other patients and have, perhaps, been hindering with Jill.

Left word on Samson's pad at lunchtime, but find now that she did not see instructions until after the session, and accordingly took notes as usual. I did not know this, however, and observed marked improvement in results. Confident that my reception personality was better and that this was a factor in improvement. Got some good stuff, and feel that I am beginning to see through the maze. Still no sign of beginning of transference, however—

February 18. Took L. to the ballet last night. CONCURRENCE. A great fuss about nothing. Why can't they find stories to tell?

February 21. A full day and a good day. Satisfactory results with J.F., followed by a good session with V. who has made a remarkable recovery and is now almost emancipated from me. And I have another aristocratic patient. The young Lord B. Bordering on idiocy, and probably not much I can do for him, but for all that I'm glad of him. Prof. S. rang to tell me. "Know this is liable to be a bit of a bind for you," he said. "But remember the advertisement is good—and not only for you, but for analysis generally."

Damnable really, I suppose, that one has to waste time dressing the window like this. Would be different in London. I think there one could afford to reject such cases, whereas here, as in all provincial towns, there is so much opposition and prejudice that one actually values an m.d. lord more than a genuine psychosis.

February 25. Worried Jill. Still no transference.

Review. Facts only. Include heresay facts, but no surmises or deductions.

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Jill Waring, twenty two, only child, born mother's thirty-eighth year.

Family History. No medical evidence of nervous or mental disease, although grandfather, founder of the shipping line and of Waring fortune, regarded as a character and said to be " eccentric " (that damnable word that conceals so much from us in nine family histories out of ten).

Grandfather stated by family to be " full-blooded man." Married life unhappy. Died 1930, cerebral thrombosis (arterio-sclerosic). Parents unremarkable. Father constipated, inclined to meanness. A " good man." Told Jill repeatedly his ambition to double grandfather's fortune and die a millionaire. Died 1937, angina pectoris. Mother died 1943, empyema following pneumonia.

Patient's History. Teething fits, said by Hughes-Brown to be " of no consequence." Walked eleven months. Talked (in phrases) twenty one months. One " hysterical nurse " dismissed after about six months. Patient recalls very little about nurses, but volunteers that " one had a tooth which jumped."

Patient said to have been very attached to grandfather, but does not remember him. He died when she was two years old. Was holding her on one occasion (age about ten months) when he had a " shock " and dropped her. She was unhurt. Has no recollection but, rationalizing during free association, advances this as explanation of her repeated falling dreams.

All the usual childhood illnesses, plus scarlet. No complications.

Privately educated by governess from age of three to twelve. Governess still in family. " Very nice person. She spoiled me thoroughly, and still does." Recollection of these years subnormal.

Started dancing lessons age five, ballet lessons seven.

School Harrogate twelve to fourteen. Unhappy. " I didn't get enough dancing." Scholastic standard—middle of class. V.G. music; but, note, backward maths. Formed strong attachment to housemistress " who did not like me." Numerous references in free association to incident in second term when parcel of sweets (which ought to have been handed in to housemistress for general distribution) discovered in patient's locker. Punishment: severe lecture, including words " lying," "equivalent to stealing," " lack of moral sense," made considerable impression on patient. Wept for two days and refused food. Week in san. Was " never happy at school again, except sometimes when I was out with Jock " (pony at riding school).

Removed from school at end of following year on advice of headmistress, who wrote, " I am recommending this course only because I am satisfied that Jill has made up her mind not in any circumstances to allow herself to be happy with us here." (Patient

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not prepared to consent to my consulting head or housemistress.)

Educated by governess till age seventeen, and concurrently in dancing by pupil of Fokine (female). Rejected by R.A. of Dancing after examination. (This fact elicited with difficulty.)

Sent to finishing school, Lucerne. Fugue of two days' duration. Found in hotel in Lugano. Declared at the time she had no knowledge of how she got there, but says now merely covering up escapade with young American art student. (This explanation of doubtful reliability.) Brought home by family solicitor. Unsettled at home. Sent Paris, study dancing. "Extremely happy." Beginning of association with ballet. Morbidly interested in ballet, at this time to the exclusion of all else. (Talk still studded with refs. to ballet personalities, terms and history.)

August of last year, patient learned that family solicitors are subsidising corps de ballet to the extent of two hundred pounds a year. Greatly shocked. Troubled with the thought that it may only be because of the money that she has been accepted as member of the corps. Strong resistance here, and I have not had the full story. Same month, August, met R.G.B. Immediate attraction and of great intensity. (Adolescent hetero-sex experience negligible, save for—unreliable—American art student. Patient stresses her own frigidity, prior to meeting R.G.B.)

Summary of emotional attachments.

1. Grandfather (pre-memory).
2. Father. "Very fond of daddy. I always trusted him, though I don't think I really respected him."
3. Mother. "Was fond of her, of course, but I liked daddy best."
4. 'Hammy' (Miss Hamilton, governess). "A darling."
5. Housemistress. "I was terribly gone on her."
6. Mlle. Sauriac (dancing mistress). "I admired her the way you admire a character in a book. I kept trying, but I could never get through to her."
7. R.G.B. "Very much in love with him," but has a horror of bearing him children, "in case they should not be normal."

Symptoms. Aural hallucinations of distant bells. Sees slight movements, as if of mice at right angles to her eyes and just beyond her field of vision. (Her own description.) The bells invariably at night; the 'mice' any time, but mostly twilight. Has full insight in these respects. Persistent sleeplessness and parieto-occipital headaches. Vivid dreams, and a degree of uncertainty as to whether she has actually undergone or dreamed certain experiences. A strong inclination, to which she has not yielded,

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to tell senseless lies. And—chief of all—the erotic phenomena of which R.G.B. has told me.

February 28. R.G.B. is impossible. On the doorstep this morning. Has been going over Grandfather Waring's papers and diaries on behalf of the family with a view to their publication next year in connection with some jubilee celebrations of the founding of the Waring line, and is now convinced that the whole key to Jill's troubles is to be found in the grandfather. Claims to have discovered real evidence of mental instability in the old man, and thinks this is vital information for me to have. "As far as I can make out," R.G.B. says, "he was more of the manic depressive type than the schizo." (!) Has left me a bundle of papers to read.

Am beginning to work up something of an anxiety neurosis myself on the Waring case. Took L. to the ballet again last night, and, coming away, commented as I have done each time on the ballerina. L. said, "Relax darling. I'm getting tired of that red herring. I know quite well it's the outside left with the big mouth we go to see." I don't think Jill has a big mouth. Not noticeably big, anyhow. That's the make up. But it's L.'s perception that startled me. I had thought that I had this interest, which is of course professional only, tucked well out of sight, and it is disturbing to learn that I am so transparent.

On top of that another couple of incidents.

My mother and old Lady Greenskyres, both up in town, oddly enough, to try to get cooks, called after lunch, mother wanting advice on a new issue of debenture stock, about which (as usual) I knew nothing; but I rang J.B., and he said buy. Both staying the night and asked what show I recommended. I said "Ballet," and realized with irritation that it was an automatic response. Mother said she thought she was too old for the ballet nowadays, and Lady G. said, "I'm not too old, but my husband is."

"But George isn't with you," Mother said.

"I know, dear," Lady G. said. "What I mean is that George is too old for me to go to the ballet." Neat.

"That's too subtle for me, dear," my mother said. And it was, of course. Old Lady G.'s *double-entendres* have yet to penetrate M.'s consciousness. Their friendship is the most incongruous and amusing I know.

But about the ballet. That *bon mot* of Lady G.'s has stuck in my mind all day, underlining what I have gradually been becoming aware of: that the ballet presents a tremendous field (virgin ground, too, far as I know) for the psychologist. Audience e.g. Why do people go to the ballet? What degree of identification? Psyche v. soma, to what extent can one separate the wolves from

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the sheep? And the ballet people themselves, a society within a society, utterly divorced from reality, inevitably narcissistic and erotogenic, their art a religion and their rites fetishistic, etc. God save me from a choreographer in my consultation room. Phew!

There is undoubtedly a paper here. *Psychology and the Ballet.* Might have a stab at it some day.

Meantime Jill. I have been coming to the conclusion in the last few days that preoccupation with ballet life is the determining factor in Jill's neurosis and that I have not probed this sufficiently. Wrote off a couple of days ago for list of ballet books.

Fraser to see me. Jill leaving just as F. arriving, and I had to introduce them. F., as always, genial and overpowering. Plainly impressed with Jill, and commented slyly afterwards on her looks and on my good fortune. Considered his remarks in bad taste, and told him so. Seems now with unnecessary heat, as I know and knew that F. can't see a pretty girl without exercising this so-called humour of his.

"My dear boy," F. said, "can't you take a joke? I'm not casting reflections on your professional conduct. Everybody knows you have a sense of honour the size of a hippopotamus, and if any of us had to send our wives to anybody, it would be you."

This is all very well, but it makes me out to be a bit of a stuffed shirt. All right, suppose I am? . . .

Ballet books arrive. A formidable pile. Examining them when Samson came in with a message from L. Wants me to ring her at six. Samson's lips curling at the books, "You are becoming quite a balletomane, Doctor."

"Miss Samson," I said, "you can go and get stuffed."

Never spoke to a woman in such a way in my life. Explanation presumably that I was smarting under Fraser's innuendoes (note even word association), and irritated because I know damned well that F. will read more into my reaction than justifiable.

Thought about Samson repeatedly this afternoon and wondered if I should apologize or not. Even wondered if she might give notice, but meeting her on the stairs got a v. nice smile. "And you call yourself a psychologist!" as L. is always saying to me. Not quite the same, however, for with L., I'm on to every trick, and deliberately pander to her illusions of superior feminine astuteness. Much relieved that Samson is not offended. Samson indispensable.

March 3. No session with Jill today. Went instead to afternoon tea at her home. This may not have been wise, but arranged the visit after careful consideration. Mainly to meet Aunt Bathia,

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but partly also out of curiosity of home circs. House big as a barracks and full of museum pieces, mostly the old grandfather's, and retained by the aunt, another " character " (senile dementia), very much the grande dame, nineteenth century dress, archaic speech, including much sailing ship terminology, wig askew, totally bald (alopecia areata ?). Extremely gracious, gave me the family history from Adam and wealth of useless information about Joshua (Capt. Waring : Jill's grandfather.) Appeared unable to accept fact that I am a doctor, and advised me repeatedly, " If you are seeking your fortune, young man, go to sea."

Jill very charming and normal. Tactful and gentle with aunt. Beauty of her movements particularly noticeable today. Wearing black woollen dress and pearls, flesh-colour nylons, and higher heels than usual. Glancing from Aunt to Jill, felt it incredible that this lovely girl should be a patient of mine.

R.G.B. knew about tea engagement and intended to be there, but did not turn up. Nearly ran him down at foot of the drive. Extremely anxious to have my reactions.

" Bit of a mausoleum, isn't it ? " And when I said it was : " Did she show you her room ? " (meaning Jill).

I said of course not, and asked why. And he said, " Well, it's one of the things she does. Are you sure she didn't take you upstairs ? " I snapped, and he changed the subject quickly, asking me if I had seen the library, and expressing disappointment when I said I hadn't. He wanted to show me the papers he was working on, and, in particular, the portrait by Holl of Joshua Waring.

Told me he felt himself on the verge of a major psychological discovery. Already has the theory, and all he needs is the proof. R.G.B. is a crashing bore. I said that I thought he was overdoing the research, and suggested that he ought to leave it alone for a bit, but he assured me that he had never in his life come across anything so interesting.

March 11. Well, R.G.B. has found his proof. Thing's too absurd to take seriously. However, for what it's worth, this is it.

The Waring fortune was built on murder. The murder was committed by Joshua Waring who, as the young mate of a whaling ship, tipped his captain overboard on a stormy night, took over the captaincy of the ship, and from this choice beginning built up the fleet of ships (originally all whalers) which now fly the Waring flag. R.G.B. claims to have found indisputable proof of this in a secret diary, and says that the family solicitors have also in their possession a signed, sealed confession ; all quite probable. The gimmick is that R.G.B. has what he calls a parallel theory.

According to this v. ingenious theory, the events of the past

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are about to repeat themselves, with Jill cast in the rôle of Joshua Waring; and the ballerina girl, Marie something, as the murdered captain. Other individuals, including myself, apparently fit into the piece, too, and are identifiable, according to R.G.B., with persons of Joshua Waring's acquaintance immediately before the murder (e.g. Joshua was consulting a doctor at regular intervals to be leeched for blood impurities).

R.G.B. convinced that the girl Marie is standing in Jill's way, just as his captain stood in Joshua Waring's way, and that there is real danger that Jill will shortly hit on the same solution as her grandfather did.

I pooh-poohed the whole thing, of course, and explained at length that this so-called parallel theory wasn't psychologically sound, but couldn't shake R.G.B.'s conviction.

"It's possible though, isn't it?" he persisted.

I couldn't say that it wasn't, but assured him emphatically that in all the annals of practical psychology there was no recorded case of this type of parallelism.

"It could happen though," R.G.B. argued.

I suppose it is the sort of thing that could happen once in a blue moon, but if it did it wouldn't have anything to do with psychology. It would be pure coincidence. R.G.B. so insistent that I had to get sharp with him, and he went off in a pet.

The whole theory is utterly fantastic, but not untypical of the sort of thing one comes across with laymen psychologists. Mentioned it to Prof. S. at the club after dinner, without names, but got no response. "Make a nice bit of fiction," he said.

March 13. Didn't sleep well last night, and found myself seriously considering R.G.B.'s nonsense. I have noticed, of course, that Jill feels an antagonism towards the ballerina girl, but have not considered this excessive or of particular significance. Question is, is this one of her resistances? Is she letting me get at the truth? Although R.G.B.'s theory is moonshine, it may contain a grain of sense, and that grain of sense (Jill's jealousy of the ballerina) may be one of the keys of the whole neurosis.

March 14. Jill in trousers today. "Hope you don't mind. It was Dickie's idea."

"Of course I don't mind," I said. "Why should I?"

"Well, you can't see my legs now," she said. "But as long as you don't mind."

Checked myself on the point of getting involved in this discussion on her legs, and said briskly, "All right, let's get down to work, shall we?"

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" It's just that I thought I'd seen you admiring my legs," she said maliciously.

" Stuff and nonsense," I said. But I was relieved that Samson had not heard that conversation.

The trousers didn't help. We had a full hour and got nowhere. Am getting increasingly worried about Jill . . .

Rang up C.J. in the later afternoon and, finding him free, went round to see him. Put the whole case to him. Told him my misgivings frankly, or at least frankly enough for him to read between the lines. I knew C.J. had it all by the time I finished.

" What do you think ? " I said. " Should I give it up ? "

C.J. puffed his pipe and stared into the fire.

" I don't know, Johnny," he said. " Sort of thing you have to decide for yourself."

" But don't you see," I said, arguing against myself, " it's an odds on chance that with an older man she would be willing to give far more than she's giving me ? "

" Some of the older men," C.J. began, and did not complete his sentence.

" I know," I said, " I know. Some of them are impossible. But, of course, I'd see she went to the right man. Phillips, for instance. The question is, having gone so far, should I hand over now ? "

" It's up to you, Johnny."

" But what do you think ? Honestly, C.J. You think that I ought to give it up, don't you ? "

" Yes," C.J. said.

Definite enough, for all C.J.'s reluctance to say it, and I agree with him.

March 15. Rang L. after leaving C.J. last night, and arranged to meet for dinner. Afterwards a gay evening and a hectic night. Imagine Fraser would not think me quite such a stuffed shirt if he could have spent last night with me. Thick head this morning and the beginnings of a cold. Have decided to persevere with Jill for one more week. I think that's fair enough. If at the end of that time I'm no forrader, I'll pack in.

March 16. A better day. Realize I must have been out of sorts for the past few weeks. Took a small dose of soneryl last night and woke much refreshed. Saw V. at eleven a.m. and told him I thought he could now discontinue his visits, as his emancipation is complete. Sorry to lose him, for I think he is probably the most intelligent patient I have ever had, and his insight all along has been such that I've learned a great deal from him.

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As for Jill—I'm convinced there is no significance in what little jealousy she feels for the ballerina girl. Thing's plain enough and is admitted as a dislike on the conscious level. Below that there doesn't seem to be anything. Have probed it hard for the last three days, and am now satisfied that this is just one more red herring. Point to bear in mind—and I had lost sight of this—is that although my results to date with Jill are negative, they are, nonetheless, results. I *am* eliminating possibilities, and it might take another man weeks to cover this ground. Despite C.J.'s opinion, I don't think I would now be justified in giving up the case.

8-38 *p.m.* This is fantastic. Someone has just tried to kill me. No possibility of a mistake. It's only by the grace of God that I'm still alive.

Had a late appointment (seven p.m.) with a man who couldn't come earlier, a greengrocer (suspect paraphrenia), first consultation. Sent Samson home. Showed my patient out at eight. Let myself out at about eight twenty-five. Pitch dark. Opened my coat and put my key in my waistcoat pocket. Became aware suddenly of someone standing close to me, half turned, and as I did so (hand still in pocket), was violently forced back and thrown over the railings.

Ought to have fallen on my head on to the basement paving thirty feet below, but, by sheer chance, my left foot, kicking out, got caught in an open design at the foot of the railing, and I found myself hanging upside down, suspended by my foot. Quite unhurt, save for a stinging pain in my ankle and a nasty bruise on the back of my head where I had struck against the stair wall. Too surprised to call out or to make any sound whatsoever. Hung there for several seconds, and heard my assailant walk slowly away.

Waited till footsteps had died away and then shouted. No one about, however. Managed to get my fingertips on to a windowledge below and, having then taken some of the weight off my foot, was able to arrange it more comfortably and also to wedge the other foot into the railing. Then with much difficulty contrived to draw myself hand over hand up my own legs till I could get a grip on the railings. Let myself into the office again, locked the door, bolted the windows, put on all the lights, pulled down the blinds, and poured a very large one from the Distinguished Guest bottle.

Sat down and tried to think, but couldn't think, partly, I suppose, because of the pain in my head and partly because of the Scotch. Surely couldn't have been the greengrocer? Had to tell somebody, and rang C.J. C.J. out, so got Fraser, told him what had happened, and he said he'd come right round.

And there the thing rests. Who could possibly want to murder

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me, and for what conceivable reason? Just beginning to feel shaky, and think I'm entitled to another snort . . .

Fraser hasn't come yet, but there's no longer any mystery. Telephone rang a few minutes ago. Sergeant at the Park Street station. "Are you all right, sir?"

"Of course I'm all right," I said. "Why?"

"Well," the sergeant said, and I heard him smiling. "Fact is, there's a man here says he just murdered you. Says he threw you off the bridge of a ship."

"Who?" I shouted.

"Well," he says, "his name is Captain Joshua Waring, but he doesn't look like a seafaring man to me. Fact, if you ask me, he's M.D., sir."

"You're holding him?" I asked.

"Yes, of course."

"I'll be right over," I said.

But I think I'll wait for Fraser. I've got to think. I've got to work this out before I face R.G. It is R.G.B., of course. I think I knew all along that it was R.G.B. And I think I knew, too, or I certainly ought to have known, that something like this was liable to happen.

Can't understand now how I could ever have let this come about. My God, the signs were all there, clear enough for a Boy Scout to read. And I missed every one of them. I've been so preoccupied with Jill that I never once turned the full glare of my mind on R.G.B. I knew he was the hysterical type, of course, and I knew he had a bee in his bonnet over Joshua Waring and this parallel nonsense—which was nonsense only when applied to Jill. Never occurred to me that the parallel theory might be a delusion—a clinical delusion of R.G.B.'s—and a delusion, of course, which became so strong and obsessional that R.G.B. himself was forced into the position of J. Waring—it's so clear now that my neglect is incomprehensible, almost criminal.

Legally, I'm all right, at least. He wasn't my patient. I've no legal responsibility. But that doesn't alter the fact that I know I'm to blame.

Another aspect that I haven't even considered yet—the most important of all: Jill. This is tremendous. This completely alters the case, ends it, in fact. Jill isn't a case at all, never has been. God, I'm pleased! And all that stuff about her erotism, all that stuff that worried and puzzled me so much—how could I have missed seeing that that was a fiction—the clearest symptom of all of R.G.B.'s derangement!

No use pretending that this doesn't mean a great deal to me.

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Opens up all sorts of possibilities that were out of the question before. But I must go slow. She'll be very distressed over R.G.B. That's the worry now. How she'll take it. No question that she was in love with him or fancied she was.

I must be patient. I'll be patient, my darling. You'll never have known anyone so patient. Must stop writing or I'll make a B.F. of myself. Whisky's going to my head.

March 14. Fraser and I went round to the Police Station last night and examined R.G.B. There wasn't much to be done. R.G.B. in a dull, confused state, although the sergeant said he had shown signs of violence earlier. Arranged for him to be admitted to the Gardner Institute, waited for the ambulance, and went along with him. R.G.B. then completely mute. Nothing I could do for him. Gave Simmonds an outline of the facts and gladly accepted his offer of an ambulance to drive me home.

Rang up the theatre, but couldn't get Jill. After much hesitation, telephoned the house and spoke to Aunt Bathia, obviously straight from bed and using the telephone like a ship's megaphone. Broke the news as tactfully as I could. Aunt Bathia quite unperturbed. "Not at all surprised," she shouted. "And don't tell me that young man is ill. He's mad. Mad as a hatter. I always said so."

I liked that. Liked it enough to tell it to Prof. S. at lunch, and it was only when he was paying me my tribute in the form of that big belly laugh of his that I felt a flush of Escariotism. Whose lectures was it? . . . "*When you feel the pangs of remorse, and, gentlemen, you will, you can always assuage your guilty conscience by noting the matter with pious repentance in your private case books.*" Fact remains, damned indiscreet of me.

Have been wondering all day how and when to get in touch with Jill. Think it would be best to leave her completely alone for a few days, and then, perhaps, some flowers and a card, then call. Would like to ask C.J.'s advice, but daren't.

Had an appointment with Jill at three p.m., but in the circumstances did not expect her to keep it. After three, when I returned from lunch. Samson very cool. "Miss Waring is waiting, Doctor."

Went into my room, supra-renal glands working to capacity. She was lying on the couch, the blind down as usual. I spoke sympathetically about R.G.B. and was very relieved to note that she appeared to be taking it in a normal, sensible way. I said, to brighten her up, "I didn't expect you today, you know, and I doubt if there's any need for you to come again. There's really nothing much the matter with you."

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"That's what I've been telling you for weeks," Jill said.

"I know," I said. "I'm sorry. I was quite misled. I had a lot of inaccurate information about you . . ."

"From Dickie?"

"Yes."

"And you believed it?"

"Yes, I'm afraid I did." It seemed very ridiculous now, but I couldn't say so. There were innumerable things that I couldn't say, things I wanted very much to say and wouldn't be able to say for a long time yet. But I was very happy.

"Poor Dickie," Jill said. "I never would have come to you, you know, in the first place if it hadn't been for Dickie. He was determined to make a case out of me. But we won't speak about Dickie. Are you sure I'm all right now?"

"Pretty sure," I said. "The pieces of the jigsaw are beginning to fall into place, and I have to admit it's quite a relief. I was very puzzled over you for a while."

"Come and tell me about it," she said, and held out her hand to me. Saw her face clearly for a moment in a band of sunlight. Eyes indescribably beautiful.

I sat down on the edge of the couch. I had to take firm control of my feelings for I knew I would have to be very careful not to make a complete ass of myself. She said something softly, but I didn't hear. I had just noticed that her coat had fallen open and that she hadn't a stitch of clothing on.

And then, as I was ringing for Samson, she had to say that terrible, unforgettable thing. Oh, God, she said it in all sincerity! "I don't know how to thank you enough," she said, "for all you've done for me."

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THE FALCON

**Was it his soul that hovered there,
high in the sunlit air?**

by PER HALLSTRÖM

SIR ENGUERRAND rode out hunting every day, and generally with his red, gold-embroidered glove on, for only the flight of the Iceland falcon with his tinkling bells could awaken joy within him. One day the falcon had driven a heron bleeding into a marsh behind a copse, where the huntsman found it and broke its neck, but the falcon himself was gone. Whether he had been attracted by a fresh prey, or had shunned the brown water, or by some caprice had let himself be thrown aloft and carried away by the wind—in vain they searched; in vain they called caressing names. Sir Enguerrand struck the trembling mouth of the head falconer with his glove until the blood flowed, and rode home at a gallop, his lips closed still more firmly and his eyelids lowered still more gloomily over the listless pupils—and the falcon was not found.

But Renaud found him, caught by the thong round his foot in a briar-bush, motionless, awaiting death from starvation with a firm grip of the branch, one wing hanging, the other raised defiantly, the narrow head stretched forward threateningly with eyes fixed and beak keen—beautiful he was amidst the blood-red berries.

Renaud's hand trembled with eagerness as he disentangled the thong from the thorns, as the bells jingled about his fingers on the ring with the mark of Sir Enguerrand. He called aloud with joy, when the sharp claws cut into his sinewy arm, and he was his, the falcon with the broadest breast and eyes of burning gold.

He was all the more his, since he would never be able to show him to anyone, for he knew that rigorous laws protected the sport of the knights. In the forest he would build a cage for him; early in the morning he would steal thither, before the bird had shaken off the cold; over the fields they would go together, sweeping with their gaze the white upper regions; they would become fond of each other, and the falcon would never miss his red glove nor the restraint of his pearl-bedecked hood. He fastened him again and ran towards the pool. Soon he came back with a duck which he had killed, and the falcon took it, and Renaud's heart was benumbed with intoxication, for it was a sign that the falcon did not despise him and would be his.

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And the falcon became his. He bent his head forward to listen, his eyes calm and watchful, when the frosty twigs crackled under Renaud's step in the silence of the morning. He sprang lightly down from his cage and stretched himself towards his hand and flapped his wings as if to fly, and so they hastened out to the expanses of the moors, which were gradually becoming light.

Their eyes gazed sharply at the dark red sky. Black lay the hills and the sparse thickets, and the trees slept on, their boughs heavy with silent birds. But the sky became brighter, flaming with gold and red, and the lines of the fields became blue. The owl flew low over the ground seeking her hiding-place while the day-birds stretched their wings and chirped gently on account of the cold.

But Renaud and his falcon hastened past, for these were no prey for them. Down on the marshes the herons were already shrieking and flying with long strokes of the wing in wide circles; there was their prey. There the falcon was cast aloft, his breast already distended and his wings ready to beat, and Renaud saw him turn to gold in the sunshine, stood with blind eyes and whirling brain, whilst the bird grew smaller against the deep azure, and he heard how the sound of his bells mocked the cries of the herons.

They circled like wheels in their fear. Now they thought to dart down to the shore and hide their long necks and stupid, terrified heads with the backward-leaning crests under the dark trees; now they tried in hesitating uncertainty to rise up in a spiral, relying on their broad wings to carry them higher than the enemy, and they wavered like reeds with the pale terror of their hearts.

But the falcon from the beginning picked out one of the strongest, one of those which at once flew aloft, for he loved to try his strength and he raised himself as quickly and unswerving as if he had circled about a sunbeam. Soon he was highest. Less than a sparrow he seemed, but something in the position of his wings, in the concentrated strength of his body, gave one an idea of the wildness of his eyes and of his extended claws—and suddenly he fell, heavy as steel, on the neck of his defenceless, upward-turning prey, and the two sank like a stone, hardly whirling even a wing's breadth.

Then Renaud ran and swam and waded to get there quickly, before the heron, stupefied by the blow, could pull itself together and in the wildness of despair use its keen beak; but the falcon dealt the death-blow quickly, and turned his large eyes, already calmed, towards his master, for he did not love to stain his feathers with blood, and waited to have the warm heart given him.

Afterwards he did not fly again that day; when Renaud threw him aloft and ran with an enticing call, he beat his wings a few times and settled on his shoulder again in proud coldness against the laughing face of the boy. He seemed to despise all trifling,

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and Renaud soon ceased, while his look acquired the far-gazing seriousness of the falcon's.

He became more devoted to him than to anything he had possessed. It seemed to him that the falcon was his own soul, his longing with broad wings and victorious glance. But there was pain in his love, gloomy foreboding of misfortune, and at times he feared lest the bird should fly from him in indifference, disappear with a mocking sound of bells, and it would be like death. In the midst of his joy he was oppressed by his insignificance ; he scarcely dared to look at the bird, and his heart ached that he would never share his joy, that his gaze would never soften at the sight of his master, and he fled to the land of dreams.

He laid himself down in the middle of the moor with red heather under his head ; while the clouds glided past like the fates of men, and Renaud told stories to his falcon.

King Arthur had come again from the sea of Brittany. His sword Excalibur, blue like the night sky in cold weather, was handed him again ; his twelve knights raised their heavy heads from the table of stone and shook off their sleep ; the ground rang under their steps. Gareth was present, the Prince's son, who dressed as a scullion and turned Lynnette's echoing mockery into love. Renaud was also there, a noble born, and his horse pranced under him, and the falcon, who now slept with lowered head, sat erect on his hand and sought his glance with eyes resplendent with joy and the golden sun of the heroic sagas.

But the clouds glided past like the fates of men, were driven, all dark, one above the other, and formed an arch of gigantic blocks, where the rays of the sun fell through the openings, pale and sharp as spears, and the falcon dreamed gloomy dreams of impotent wrath and awoke with a shriek.

Wandering boys soon caught sight of Sir Enguerrand's bird in Renaud's hand ; the knight's menials seized him and led him to the castle, and he shivered when the falcon was taken from him, motionless and proud as always, without turning his bent neck, without a glance from his cold, calm eyes. The bird was taken to his master, but he had not even a caress for the favourite he had missed, for he had allowed himself to be touched by ignoble hands.

Sir Enguerrand gazed down in silence at Renaud, and in his mind there settled more and more distinctly the memory of an old game-law of the days when the noble's foot lay steel-shod on the neck of the people, and pleasures fluttered inviolable about his shoulders—and his eyebrows closed about the certainty that the old law had never been repealed. The law provided that he who stole a falcon with the mark of a knight on its foot should pay

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twelve sols of silver or six ounces of flesh from his ribs under the beak of a famished bird of prey.

Sir Enguerrand knew of Renaud's poverty and looked at his brown, naked breast. He stretched out his hand, and touched it with a testing, unfeeling gesture. Then he sent a message to the neighbouring castle, which raised its pointed roofs above the forest, and invited the seneschal and his two daughters to be his guests three days later and see some falcons fly, after they had heightened the solemnity of a thief's punishment by their presence. They were to come before dawn.

Renaud's eyes had been dilated by the darkness of his prison. They were black and immobile and the pupils merely contracted as they slowly grew brighter and reflected the torn clouds and rising sun in the east. Behind Sir Enguerrand was borne the Iceland falcon, his claws sharply fastened in the glove and a hood over his keen, hungry eyes which had not seen food for three days.

But farther behind swayed a line of colour which burned and flamed. Six light-coloured horses, almost blue in the dawn, were led by pages at a gallop, and red velvet cloths were lifted from their curved necks. The carriage that they drew was red, and in it gold shone heavily over the delicate breasts and slender arms of the seneschal's daughters. Six mounted damsels followed with hair as blonde as corn and their pointed feet playing under the folds of their skirts. Six huntsmen blew notes, which seemed to dance and turn round like wheels out of the mouths of the crooked horns.

They formed a semicircle, plume by plume, shoulder by shoulder, round a bush where the prisoner was tied. As the horse-cloths fluttered in the wind, red penetrated deep into the shadow, and red burned jubilantly in the sunshine. The noble ladies leaned forward out of the carriage.

They were like herons, with their conical hoods, Renaud thought, and he almost expected them to utter shrill cries when the notes of the horns fell far away like projected stones, and all grew silent. But when he saw them more clearly, with their thin, straight lips and strangely dreamy eyes, which were always directed in cold ecstasy towards something infinitely distant, and the indolent white hands in their laps and the long folds of their robes, then they seemed to him wondrously beautiful like the richest images of saints with dimly burning candle flames at their feet, and it pained him that they should see him bound. He let his eyes run on, past the damsels—pretty, shy birds, whom he would have liked to frighten with a whistle—past the retainers' red faces and mouths gaping with curiosity, past the brown plain, where he had run until he was tired and dreamed until he was weary.

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He knew the fate that awaited him, but when the Iceland falcon was brought forward, and he understood that this was the bird which was to execute the punishment, he laughed with joy. His heart throbbed with pride, as when they were his—the bird and the long sunny day and the fields with listening winds and swaying trees with the yellow leaves of autumn.

When the falcon had again beheld the light and accustomed himself to seeing, he gathered his strength for flight and waited to be cast aloft, whilst his eyes sought for prey in the air—they were keen and fierce with hunger and they had no memories in their depths; they recognized none. But Renaud's eyes looked anxiously enquiring into the bird's and were moistened with sorrow not to meet their gaze. They should have reflected his days of daring and longing, his contempt and his dreams on the red heather, but they merely waited greedily for prey, cold and cruel, like the curiosity of the people or the jest on Sir Enguerrand's thin lips. He felt the pang of grief more bitterly than before, and turned his head aside to recollect himself, with his eyelids closed about fluttering thoughts

He lay thus, while the herald read aloud the law, "twelve sols in silver—six ounces of flesh from near the heart—thus Sir Enguerrand protects the pleasures of the nobles." He did not look up, and when the bird plunged its beak in his breast, he did not utter a cry, merely quivered, so that the bird's eyes flashed angrily, and it stretched out its wings as if about to flap them.

The seneschal's daughters leaned their heads forward with a gleam of interest in their strangely dreamy eyes, but they did not raise their hands from their laps, and their robes lay as before in unruffled folds. The horses snorted at the smell of blood and stamped on the frosty ground, so that the red cloths fluttered in the blue pallor of the morning air; but Renaud lay silent, and the huntsmen stood in vain with distended cheeks and their horns at their lips, ready to drown his cry of pain.

The first pang had torn at his most delicate fibres; it was as if his heart would go with it, but afterwards, in dizzy torpor, as the blood flowed warm from the wound, and the keen beak tore at his breast, Renaud dreamed himself in the lofty atmosphere of his dreams. He understood all, death and honour, and he felt how it burned and dazzled—the golden sun of the heroic sagas.

When Sir Enguerrand thought that the six ounces of the law were fulfilled, he gave the signal to his men to blow, and the falcon was lifted off, satiated with blood, his eyes again filled with calm pride. The procession was again set in motion, with greater mirth than before, towards the reeds which shone yellow in the distance; but Renaud could not be wakened. He had dreamed himself to

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death. They merely unbound him and let him lie with red heather beneath his head.

But the Iceland falcon was never allowed to sit on his master's hand, for Sir Enguerrand did not love to drink from a goblet on which the lips of another had imprinted a kiss.

* * *

TRAVELLERS' JOY

Or a pilgrims' progress, with misadventures for many by the way! But most of our travellers arrive in the end. Can you recognize them? Count one point for each traveller, one for the source and one for the author, making thirty points in all. You will find the answers on page 88.

1. *A stay-at-home for "twice ten tedious years", this worthy trainband captain ventured abroad on his wedding anniversary, and went further than he'd intended.*
2. *"Leave to go and see my wife, whom I call the Belle Aurore!" That he asked and that he got—nothing more.*
3. *Abandoning his royal charge in a far country, at his sovereign's bidding, this "feather in the wind" is chiefly memorable for his exit—"pursued by a bear!"*
4. *Wandering mid the heather, on a quest for haddocks' eyes, this old gentleman worked through the night converting his finds into waistcoat buttons.*
5. *A very unofficial gravedigger, this, and a wife-beater, too, maybe, he accompanied his banker master into the French reign of Terror, and returned a chastened citizen.*
6. *This dauntless young blood who "staid not for brake and who stopped not for stone—Who swam the Esk river where ford there was none," gate-crashed a bridal party and carried off his lady under her bridegroom's very nose.*
7. *"In spite of all their friends could say,*
   On a winter's morn, on a stormy day,"
   they went to sea in a much-holed vessel!
8. *An impractical knight, indeed, and apt to mistake what was for what was not. Windmills, for instance!*
9. *Married to a sea captain at sixteen, this young navigational genius found herself skipper overnight, and a match for all her peers—save one.*
10. *"Dear little parasite," her author called her. An adventuress indeed, who missed her "ladyship" by miscalculation, and a very short head, but the Battle of Waterloo by her clever contriving!*

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OLD WAGON

"Out here," he said, "on the edge of things, it's the law of the gun that counts"

by HOWARD FAST

ON the seat of the wagon, as it drove into the little town, were a man and woman and a child of six. The man drove two jaded horses; the child, sitting between the man and woman, twisted his head from left to right with never flagging interest. The woman, who was small, sat primly on the seat, as if she knew what a poor impression the wagon made, and desired to counteract it.

The old wagon was piled high with household goods, with pots and pans and chests and chairs and quilts, with much that was no better than junk. Over all, a patched canvas cover was drawn. Roped on to the side were two water barrels. And on the back, with bare, dusty legs hanging over the tailboard, were two more children, a boy of eleven, a girl of nine.

The horses were tired, and they walked into the town slowly. The man was tired, and he slouched over his reins, a long, rawboned man with a stubble of beard on his face. Only the woman seemed as fresh as if she had just got out of bed and washed and dressed. She was a little woman, and she sat primly, with her hands folded in her lap. She wore a plain blue cotton dress that fell to her ankles, a duller blue than the colour of her eyes, which were large and round and warm. The eyes were the one prominent feature in her small plain face. Her black hair was drawn back tightly under a black bonnet.

It was a few hours past midday, hot, sunny, when they drove into the town. The town consisted of one long street, carpeted with dust, and at this hour it was empty, except for a dozen or so horses standing in front of two saloons.

Briefly, the woman glanced at the town, at the flat house fronts, at the saloons and the horses, after which she folded her hands again a little more firmly in her lap. Her lips compressed, and a click of her tongue told her husband she didn't like the town.

"Don't like it much myself," he admitted. "Got a name for being bad."

"Just shiftless, looks to me," she said. "Now don't stop, but go right through."

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"Now, Martha," he complained, "I got to rest the horses."

"Rest them plenty tonight."

He pointed ahead to where the single street of the village lost itself in flat land that was brown and yellow, hot and baked. "How do I know there's water out along there, Martha?"

"You don't know. But if we're a-goin' to live there, there's water. That's all."

The child said, "Ma, I'm thirsty."

"See," the man said. "Ain't no reason why the little shaver shouldn't have a nice cool cup of water."

"No reason except that a saloon's the place you'll look for it."

"Martha, there's a trough out there, an' you can't drive dry, tired horses past water without giving them a drink."

"All right," she nodded.

The team scented the water and quickened their pace. They found the trough themselves and plunged their dusty heads into it. The man sighed. The woman clicked her tongue and looked straight ahead of her. The boy began to climb down from the seat.

"You stay here," she ordered.

"Ma, I want a drink."

"Stay here."

"Suppose I get the little shaver a cup of cool water," the man suggested.

"We ain't got money to throw away."

"Now, Martha, why talk that way. I took a pledge nine months past, an' I ain't broken it."

She looked at him for a moment. "Guess I shouldn't a said that, Jim."

Awkwardly stretching his cramped legs, the man climbed down from the wagon. He drew himself up to his full height and worked his neck. Then he ambled behind the wagon and ordered the boy and girl to stay where they were. He came back and patted the horses, and the woman looked at him fondly. He grinned at her, and said, "Maybe this here's where our luck turns, Martha. Seems we had just about enough bad luck to last folks a lifetime."

"You go get that water."

As he turned to the saloon, the door opened, and two men came out—one short, bow-legged, small of face, wearing blue jeans, booted; the other larger, heavier, better dressed. Both were armed. Both grinned as they looked at the heavily loaded wagon. They came down the steps and stood by the water trough, grinning.

The shorter one said, "Mister, that's a fine load you're packing there." The other one, "Mister, you buying junk or selling it."

The woman stared straight ahead of her. If any change came over her face, it was a tightening of her lips, a finer etching of the

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little lines of pain, of hope, of anxiety about her mouth.

From the shorter one: "Mister, them nags of yours had just about enough water, wouldn't you say? You don't want them to drink the trough dry."

"Jim—" She left off her words, still looking straight ahead.

"I never yet been begrudged water," he muttered, shifting uneasily from foot to foot, conscious of the old, patched wagon, conscious of his dirty brown overalls.

"Maybe we begrudge a lot of things to your kind," the taller man said. "Maybe we don't like your kind nice enough to be perlite. Maybe this is cattle country an' not for ground-scrapers."

She saw the stiffening of her husband's body, and she said, quickly, "Jim, we got to get goin'."

"I'll get the shaver a drink of water," he said softly. Then he walked up the wooden steps into the saloon. The two men glanced after him, turned slowly, and followed.

She waited, and it seemed to her that she waited a long time, but actually it couldn't have been more than four or five minutes.

Further up the street on the other side was a sign which said *Clover City Express*. It hung over the front of a store, and now, as she watched, a man stepped into the street and stood under the sign, mopping his brow—a short, stout man in his vest and shirt sleeves. He looked up the street, and then down at the wagon. He met her eyes and nodded.

She felt cold, in spite of the heat. She felt an ominous uncertainty, as before a thunderstorm.

"I'm thirsty," the boy said again.

She heard her husband's voice from behind the saloon door. She unclasped her hands, and they were clammy with sweat. She climbed down from the wagon, instructing the boy, "Sit there—don't you stir."

Walking round the wagon, she saw the boy and girl on the tailboard, leaning back and half asleep. The girl smiled at her, drowsily.

Then she made up her mind and went into the saloon.

It was a big place, almost empty, with tables, a high raftered roof, and a long bar. She stood just inside the door, her heart throbbing, her hands wet, afraid for herself, afraid for her husband, remembering how he had grinned and told her that their hard luck was broken. She recalled the stretch of their hard luck, the child dying, her husband breaking his leg, the farm taken away from them, their long, painful journey westward.

Her husband stood at the bar. There were about a dozen men at the bar now—men in jeans, booted, armed, their hats tilted

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back; men somehow different from her husband. At first, she couldn't understand the difference, why it made her afraid; then she realized that they were not men who had ever worked with their hands for a living, not farmers, not cowpunchers.

Her husband was saying, "I came for a cup of water, an' I aim to get it."

The bartender was polishing glasses, ignoring him.

"Jim," she said, "come along."

One of the men said, "Come in, sister. Have a drink."

She saw her husband turn, walk to the man. "That's my wife," he said.

"Sure. I aim to buy her a drink."

"That's my wife you're speaking about."

"Jim!"

She saw his long brown form unleash, saw the booted, armed man sprawl across the room, crash into a table and chairs. She screamed. Her husband didn't move as the fallen man fired. Then, slowly, he bent over, holding the bar for support.

It had all happened too quickly; it was over, and it was like a dream, like something that had never been. Her husband was bent painfully, holding on to the bar. The others, the booted men, the bartender, were watching. They hadn't moved; they were watching, calmly, curiously. The fallen man picked himself up.

She ran to her husband, and he twisted his head to look at her. She put her arm round him. "You're not hurt," she said. "Jim, you're not hurt—"

"Maybe—a little."

The others hadn't moved. They were still watching, calmly. She looked at them, started to speak, then clamped her mouth shut. Her hand was wet with blood.

"I'll help you outside," she told her husband.

"All right, Martha."

He leaned on her heavily, and they went through the door. None of the men moved. She shouldered the door open and helped her husband through.

"Looks like our luck kinda run out again, Martha," the man said.

There were people in the street now, a little crowd in front of the saloon around the wagon. The children were standing by the wagon, wide-eyed, excited. When she saw her mother and father come out, the girl began to cry.

Martha paused on the steps, her husband heavier now, as if all his weight was leaning on her. She felt his blood on her hands. She stood there, feeling his weight, feeling weak, sick, looking at the people round the wagon.

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"Some of you—help me," she cried.

They watched her, but nobody moved. She heard the door of the saloon open, and realized that the men inside were coming out.

One man detached himself from the crowd and came up to her. She recognized the stout man she had seen on the street before. He nodded to her, and without speaking put an arm round Jim's waist. They went down the steps, and the three children edged up, shyly, the girl still crying. The people made way for them.

"You can't put him in the wagon, missus," the stout man said. "Take him to my place."

She looked at him, gained confidence from his fat, moustached face, and nodded. They went towards the shop. The children followed. The team walked slowly after them.

From the saloon to the door of the *Clover City Express*, a trail of blood was left. The children walked in it; the team walked in it, and the old wagon rattled after. The six year old was crying now, but through his tears his wide, curious eyes continued to gather everything in.

They came to the door of the shop, and when the children stopped, the team stopped, too, more satisfied not to move in the hot sun. Some of the bystanders had followed, and now they stood on the side of the wagon in the shade, peering into the shop. Two of the men from the saloon stood across the street.

Inside the shop, the woman and the fat man had stretched Jim on a bench. The woman unbuttoned his shirt, bared his breast, and wiped away the blood. His eyes were open, and he tried to smile at her.

"I guess I should a kept the pledge an' not gone near the saloon," he whispered.

"You'll be all right, Jim. You're not hurt bad."

"Where're the kids?"

"Outside."

"That's good. It ain't nice they should see this. What kind a place is this?"

"A newspaper shop, I guess." She glanced round, at the racks of type, at the presses, at the wet proof sheets hanging from a line.

"My shop," the fat man said. "You'll be all right, mister. I'm going for Doc." He nodded at the woman, and went out. She glanced after him, saw the wagon, the children crouched close to it, the bystanders, and across the street, the two armed men from the saloon, standing close to the wall, rolling cigarettes.

When she turned to her husband again, his eyes were closed. He breathed through slightly parted lips, slowly, with effort. She

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made a pack of cloth over his wound and smoothed back his hair. She looked at him out of her strangely mild blue eyes, and there was no sign of sorrow on her face except the little etched lines of pain about her lips.

She shook her head and went to the door. The bystanders watched her as she came out of the shop. The six year old ran to her and buried his face in her skirt. The other two children stood by the wagon, their frightened faces lifted to hers.

"Now, now," she said, "it's all right—you understand? Your pa's just a little hurt, but he's all right."

With surprising strength for so small a woman, she lifted the six year old on to the wagon seat. "Now you stay there, out of the sun."

She turned and saw that the bystanders had drifted away. The two men from the saloon had crossed the street and were standing near the wagon.

"What do you want?" she demanded of them.

"Nothin', missus—only that's a pretty boy you got a settin' up there, a mighty pretty boy."

Slowly, softly, she said, "I'm not a person to hate. I'm not a person to hold bitterness. What you done, you done. Now get away from here."

"Sure, missus, that's what we like to hear, an' maybe we won't hold no grievance either. Only we were thinking, maybe, you didn't see nobody shoot your man. Maybe there didn't anybody shoot him, an' it was just an accident. Maybe you could make up your mind that it was an accident, because that's a mighty pretty little boy you got up there."

She turned to glance at the child, and then back to the two men, who were puffing on their cigarettes, their hats tilted back on their heads.

"Get out of here," she whispered.

"Sure, missus. That's a right pretty kid."

"Get out of here!"

They strolled away. The girl and boy pressed close to her, but she seemed hardly to notice them, staring straight ahead of her at nothing.

"You get into the wagon, both of you," she said. "A body's got trouble enough. You get into the wagon an' mind your brother."

She went back into the store, and sat down by her husband. She made a fan of some old newspaper, and waved it over him to cool him. He still lay with his eyes closed. She was sitting like that when the fat man returned with the doctor. The doctor was

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an elderly man: thin, unshaven, he had a white moustache and a small white beard.

"This is the doctor, ma'am," the fat man said. "I don't know your name; mine's Jed Logan. This is Doc Hartly. He'll see to your husband."

The doctor nodded, took off his jacket, and started to roll up his sleeves. He had small grey eyes that darted from her to her husband.

She rose and turned to the doctor. "My name's Martha Wesley. That's my husband, Jim. I guess he's hurt bad."

"Maybe he is, an' maybe he ain't," the doctor said. "There ain't no use thinkin' he is—yet."

"Thank you. We don't have much money, but I guess I can pay what you ask."

"I ain't askin' yet." He opened his bag and bent over the wounded man. Logan took her arm and led her to the back of the shop, through to a little room that held a cot bed, a table and a few chairs.

"Sit down," he told her. "You sit down and rest. I guess you need some rest. I'll fix you a cup of coffee."

"Thank you," she whispered.

"Sure. Sometimes there's nothing I like so much as a cup of coffee, hot as the weather is."

There was a coffee-pot warming on the stove. He poured a cup of coffee and set it in front of her.

"Thank you. You've been good to me."

"I'm sort of making up for the way our town treated you, I suppose. Clover City's an up-and-coming place, but a little strange—a little strange."

She drank the coffee. It was good, warm. In spite of the heat, she was cold inside. She liked the fat man who sat across from her. She wanted to like someone, not to feel completely in terror of the place.

"Why did they shoot him?" she asked. "Why?"

"They've shot others, ma'am. They've thieved and murdered."

"But why?"

"Because they're bad, ma'am. Because they're strong, and here, on the edge of things, strength counts. Because there's no law here yet, except the law of the gun—and they've got the guns."

"Aren't there decent people here, men with wives and children?"

"Sure," the fat man nodded. "I'm decent sometimes; so is Doc. There are plenty of small dirt farmers, small cattlemen. But they're afraid. We're all afraid. They were even afraid to help you with your man."

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"You weren't," she said.

"No—" The fat man leaned back and looked at the ceiling. "I got no wife, I got no kids. I'm a used-up newspaperman, and Doc's a used-up medico. I've seen it coming, and I'm beginning to talk back. It's a pity I'm not a fighting man, Mrs. Wesley, but I can set type. If you can tell me who shot your husband . . ?"

"I don't know his name." She was thinking of the six year old, sitting on the wagon seat.

"You know what he looks like. If you describe him?"

She moved back from the table, folded her hands in her lap. Her wide blue eyes were fixed on the fat man. "They threatened my son," she said. "I have three children. My man's shot—"

"You're afraid."

"I'm not afraid. We've had a lot of hard luck, maybe too much. I've learned not to hate. If my man lives, I'll thank God."

"And if he doesn't live?"

"Then I'll thank God He spared me my children."

"And you love him?"

Her mild blue eyes fixed on the fat man's face. "Why should you ask me that?" she demanded gently. "Maybe I never told him, maybe he never told me. We're plain folks, an' that kind of talk don't come easy. We been through a lot together. We lost our first boy, fourteen he'd be now. We lost our farm. It ain't easy, pushing west like this in an old wagon, trying to feed three kids, trying to find a piece of land to light on."

The fat man said earnestly, "I know that, but this is the kind of West you're pushing into, and this is the kind of thing that has to be stopped. I don't delude myself on the power of my press; still, I put out a newspaper, and people read it. If I could print the story, with proof of who shot your husband, the governor might read it. It might change things."

She shook her head. "It might kill my child. I don't want more trouble, mister. I want peace. I want to raise my children in peace."

The fat man shrugged his shoulders.

"All right, Mrs. Wesley. I hope to God your husband will be all right."

They went back into the shop. The doctor had evidently finished. He was rolling down his sleeves, buttoning them. The boy and the girl had come into the shop, and were standing in awed silence by the type case. Her husband still lay on the bench, his eyes closed. He seemed to be sleeping.

The fat man and the little woman stood and waited. The doctor crawled into his jacket, closed his bag of tools. He turned to them then, and said:

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"He'll be all right."

She wavered a bit, nodded, came forward and stood looking down at her husband.

"He's sleeping," the doctor explained. "I gave him something to make him sleep. That's what he needs most now. The wound's nasty, but it ain't bad. According to my reckoning, he'll be up and walking tomorrow. It's nasty, but it looks worse than it is. Through the pectoralis major, out and through the triceps. No bullet to worry about, no organs. But he can't stay here. Suppose Jed and me, we carry him over to my place?"

She shook her head. "You've done so much already—"

"Done nothing. You sit here and read the papers, and we'll be back."

After they had gone, carrying her husband, she sat on a chair near a press, smiling a little. The boy and girl came and pressed close to her. Then she put her arms round them. She seemed lost in the wonder of having her husband's life again, and at least ten minutes went by before she remembered the six year old.

"Where's Billy?" she asked them.

"He was settin' on the wagon seat, sleepin', I guess."

She went outside, and the boy and girl followed. The wagon seat was empty. As in a daze, she walked round and round the wagon, looking inside from the back, lifting the brown canvas cover at the sides. She called: "Billy! Billy!" Her voice sounded strange in the almost empty sunbaked street. Then she stopped walking, leaned against the wagon, limp, tired, staring at the two children who were left.

It was later in the afternoon now; shadows were longer. The little town appeared to be waking up. There were more horses at the hitching posts.

"We left him on the wagon seat," the girl said. The girl was frightened now, ready to cry again.

The mother nodded, and pointed to the shop. "You go in there," she told them. "Lord knows, I got enough trouble. You go in there and stay in there."

"Where's Billy?"

"You never mind that. You go in there and stay in there."

She leaned against the wagon until they had gone into the newspaper shop. Then she sighed, straightened up her small form. The little etched lines of pain appeared round her mouth again. She walked to the wagon seat, reached under it, and took out a double-barrelled shotgun. It was heavy, and she held it awkwardly.

Holding it waist high, muzzles presented, she walked down

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the street to the saloon. In front of the saloon, she cocked both triggers. Some men, riders, were standing on the porch of the saloon, but when they saw the gun and the look on her face, they made way for her.

"Careful with that popgun, sister," one said.

Another began to laugh, but the laugh died in his throat.

She shouldered her way through the door, stepped to one side, and stood with her back against the wall. There were more men at the bar now, men at the tables playing cards. The man who had shot her husband was there. The tall man and the short man were there. The bartender was polishing glasses, and when he saw her he went on polishing, more and more slowly, his eyes never leaving the shotgun. One by one, they stopped drinking, stopped playing, until every man in the saloon was staring, not so much at her as at the shotgun.

"Is this a ladies' raid?" someone asked.

The short man laughed; the laughter spread, then stopped as abruptly as it had started. The man who had shot her husband took a step forward, hesitated, then another step, then stopped.

"What's your game, lady?" he enquired.

Her voice trembled a little as she spoke. "You took my boy. I came for him."

The bartender said, "Nobody took your kid, lady. Nobody seen your kid. This ain't no place for you, an' you'd better get outa here afore that gun goes off."

"I came for my boy."

Another step forward; his hand felt for his gun, closed over it.

"Don't come nearer," she said. "You wouldn't shoot a woman; and, if you did, this shotgun might go off. I came for my boy. I'll wait five minutes for you to bring him to me."

The bartender pleaded, "Lady, we ain't got the kid."

The man who had shot her husband stared into her wide blue eyes, shrugged, nodded. In a whisper, he said something to the short man, who walked towards the back of the saloon. The shotgun was becoming heavier, and she thought that in a little while the weight of it would be too much for her to bear. Two minutes or five minutes; the short man returned, leading the six year old. The child was crying.

"Stop that crying," she said. She dropped the muzzle of the gun, and the bartender sighed and lowered the glass he was polishing. She took the child's hand. "Stop that crying," she said again. Together, they went out.

When she came to the newspaper shop, the fat man and the

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doctor were already there and waiting. She let the shotgun fall to the floor, dropped into a chair, and gathered the six year old in her arms. The doctor picked up the shotgun; the fat man stared at her, a curious expression on his face.

"It's all right," she whispered. "The gun's not loaded."

"They took the kid," the fat man said.

"They took him."

"My God," the fat man whispered, "my God."

She rocked the child back and forth, pressed her face to his until he had stopped crying. The fat man went into the back room and returned with a handful of lump sugar which he divided among the three children.

"My God," he said again.

The doctor stood there, still holding the shotgun. Outside, the sun was setting, the shadows were longer. The doctor said, "I feel young. Young and crazy. I feel like going out there—"

"You're not afraid," the fat man said. "You'll tell me who he was."

"I'll tell you," she nodded, and then she went on to describe the man who had shot her husband.

"That's Rockly. The little one's Krane. God, I'll make something of this. I'll go to the governor. I'll go to Washington, if I have to. I'll plaster the *Clover City Express* all over the country. This place is hell, but hell's been changed before. This will start the break. I'll get the extra out tonight."

"They won't let you," the doctor said. "They'll come here."

"Then we'll fight them. It might as well come to that."

"Who? They're all afraid. You're no fighting man. Neither am I. I wish to God I was. I feel young—young and crazy."

"Get them here, Jones, Frisbee, Amlee, Forster. Maybe you can get Clemens and Angus. Get someone to ride for Kenly and Stevens. Get Mat Wythe, Gil Smith. That'll be enough."

"I tell you, they're afraid."

"So am I. She'll talk to them. Get them here and let them look at her. Meanwhile, I'll set type."

"All right," the doctor whispered, "all right."

She sat with her children round her, while the fat man set type furiously. She sat there while the shadows grew longer, disappeared in the haze of dusk. She sat there while armed, serious-faced men entered the shop, spoke in whispers to the fat man, leaned against the wall, holding their rifles.

When they were all there, she spoke to them, and they looked into her wide, mild blue eyes. When she had finished speaking, the doctor took her hand and said: "Better go to my house now,

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with the kids. The women are there. Maybe you can help them."

He walked with her to his house, leading the team. At the house, he stood a moment, looking at her.

"Good night," he said. "Your husband will be all right." He hesitated, holding her hand. "Funny place, this town. I'd like to see it ten, fifteen years from now. Sometimes I wish I was younger, sometimes I don't." Then he turned away, and she looked after him until he had vanished in the night.

She entered the house. As she closed the door behind her, she heard the first shot. It was the beginning of a long, hot, tense night—a night that seemed to last for ever.

It was early morning. On the seat of the wagon, as it drove out of the little town, were a man and a woman, and a child of six. The man, one arm bandaged to his side, drove two jaded horses; the child, sitting between them, twisted his head from left to right with never flagging interest. The woman, who was small, sat primly in the seat, as if she knew what a poor impression the wagon made, and desired to counteract it.

Almost at the end of the long single street of the town, they passed a fat man standing in front of a print shop. He waved to them. The child stared, wide-eyed, curious. The woman moved slightly, and it seemed that she would wave back; then her folded hands relaxed in her lap, as if she realized that her prim, motionless figure was the only way she could tell the world that the tattered wagon was not the beginning and the end of their life.

The fat man watched the wagon until it became a speck on the brown and yellow plain, until it disappeared.

* * *

SIC TRANSIT . . .

An American pilot, involved in a flying accident after a transatlantic flight, was sent to a well known hospital in Aberdeen. A blood transfusion was ordered and the grateful pilot wrote his donors a cheque for a hundred pounds by way of appreciation. A second transfusion was given and in due course a cheque for fifty pounds was received by the hospital secretary.

Still a third transfusion was found necessary, and after it had been successfully administered the pilot wrote a final letter of thanks.

The secretary mentioned the matter to the surgeon who looked thoughtful. "Mon," he remarked shrewdly, "blood will tell!"

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JEREMY IN THE WIND

Of course you won't believe it!

by NIGEL KNEALE

YES, it was windy when I first met him, mister. He was standing in the middle of a field, waving his arms at the big black birds who steal the little seeds men put in the ground. My word, he could swing his arms about!

So I climbed over the wall and went up—keeping low, because you're not supposed to go into men's fields, are you?

When I reached him, I saw how thin he was. You could almost see the wind blowing through him—you could really! He had a long black coat down to the ground, and a brown hat and black gloves with little holes in at the ends.

But I liked his face. I said, "I do like your face, Jeremy." You see I knew his name was Jeremy. It was a sort of special face, pretty big, and greeny-coloured, with black eyes you could see right inside. And a big smiling mouth; but I think his lips were sore: they were split and flaky-looking.

I had to shout because it was so windy. "Will you come for a walk with me, Jeremy?" I shouted it right up close to him and then—you'll never guess what happened. Three little yellow mice came out of Jeremy's mouth and ran down his coat to the ground. I like those sort of mice.

When they had run right away, I took Jeremy's arm. Poor old Jeremy! He could hardly move because his feet—his foot, it was really, because he only had one—it was buried deep in the earth. So I got it out for him and then he was taller than I am—I had to look right up at him, like you look up at your daddy when you're a little boy. As the wind blew, Jeremy waved his arms about and shook his head. I don't think he wanted the wind to blow that way.

Then I heard him talk for the first time. He's got a sort of dry rattly voice, and you have to listen very hard to tell what he's saying.

Jeremy said, "Let's go now. Go." So I put my arm round him and we went along down the field, with his foot dragging in the soil because it was so stiff. I don't think it's very exciting just to stand in a field like he was, do you?

We travelled on the road together for a while: Jeremy was

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leaning on me and it was pretty steep, so at last we stopped. Jeremy rested against the hedge while I had a drink out of a stream: the water was cold because it was so windy.

A man came along on a horse-cart full of cabbages, and presently he stopped and looked at us.

"What have you got there?" said the man. "Jolly old pals, eh?" And he started to laugh till his eyes shut.

Then there was another huge gust of wind, and Jeremy's coat billowed out and he wagged his hand towards the man on the cart, and made a noise in his throat.

"He's bad," said Jeremy, and his head nodded at me. I knew the man had upset him.

So I left Jeremy against the hedge and ran at the man. He stopped laughing then and swished at me with his whip—there's the mark just by where my hair begins, see?—but I pulled him down into the road and knocked him, over and over again, until he stopped moving.

The horse was frightened, I think, because he ran away, and cabbages were falling out of the cart all over the road. And when I walked away with Jeremy, I saw something dark sort of spreading round the man.

But Jeremy—he just chuckled.

As we went along, he talked to me—funny sort of voice he's got—until a pebble fell out of his mouth.

Then he stopped, and didn't say anything at all. So I thought, perhaps, the pebble helped him, and when I saw a nice shiny yellow one by the roadside, I popped it into his mouth like a sweet. At the top of the next hill he started to talk again, and when gusts of wind came, he swung his arms.

I think we must have walked a long way after that, and my feet were sore. It was about sunset, too, when we came to a village; not very far from here, I think.

There was a kind of shop where they sold tea, and we went in.

"We'll have food now," I said to Jeremy. But he said nothing and he didn't move, because everything was still in the shop. Funny, isn't it? He's so quiet when the wind doesn't blow.

In a bit a woman came out. When she saw Jeremy she said, "Take that thing out of here!" But he didn't do anything.

She looked at me again and then back at Jeremy and gave a little scream. "Oh!" she said—her voice came out squeaky—"it's you! That poor carter!—you—you—" She ran out into the room behind the shop, and there was a noise of bells ringing.

I said, "We'll get some tea all right, Jeremy," and patted him on the back: little pieces of straw fell out of his hand. I was

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hungry and cold and I said loudly, "We want some tea!" But nobody answered.

After a minute—yes, it was only a minute—I heard more feet coming outside, and the door opened.

I don't like policemen, do you? Well, it was one of them, and he looked at me and Jeremy, and licked his lips quickly and said, "You'd better come with me, I think."

You can't guess what happened then.

Jeremy fell on the policeman! They tumbled to the ground, and I saw Jeremy's hat and the policeman's helmet roll under a table. The policeman grabbed at Jeremy's greeny-yellow head, but I knocked him and pulled Jeremy away.

I think I knocked that policeman pretty hard, too. I got my arm round Jeremy and we ran out of the shop as fast as anything. I could hear the old policeman groaning behind, and the woman shouting.

So now I'm here, mister.

I like your house. It's nice to sit by a warm fire and see good things about you. I'd like to stay here always.

Why don't you look at that window over there? That's right.

Oh, you don't need to jump like that: it's only Jeremy. He's standing just where I left him. Don't you think he's got a pretty nice face? But he must be cold out there, and he hasn't got any hat either, poor old Jeremy.

Now I'm going to give you a surprise.

Jeremy and me are going to live here: in this house: always.

No, don't jump about and try to pick that thing up. I know what it is. A telephone.

And you mustn't run away! I'll just have to knock you. Hard.

And then I—me and Jeremy'll be in this house always. And sometimes we'll sit in the garden and he can talk to me.

On windy days.

* * *

NO CHOKING

One Sunday morning on the heath the local dogs were boasting of their exploits.

"I gave that hare fifty yards start," bragged a greyhound, "and beat him to the post."

"And I carried my master down four flights from a blazing building," smirked a wire-haired terrier.

"Don't think I always vus chust a dachshund," sniffed the foreigner in their midst. "Back home I vus a Saint Bernard."

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DELILAH

For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil

Book of Proverbs

Kiss me once more, kiss me again, and kiss :
Give me of thy most eager kisses, give me of thy most amorous : I will return thee four, more hot than fire.

Alas ! dost thou complain ? Come, let me comfort thee, and give thee ten most gentle kisses. Thus, mingling our so happy kisses let us enjoy each other at our ease.

Thus unto each a double life is given. Both in ourselves and in our loves we'll live. Suffer me, love, to think some foolish thought :

For, living in restraint, I am ever ill at ease . . .

LOUISE LABÉ, 1520-1566, *translated by* RICHARD ALDINGTON

Serpent's Tooth

" Madame," says he, " I hope your ladyship can't tax me with ever betraying the secrets of the family ; and I hope, if you was to turn me away, I might have that character of you." " I don't intend to turn you away, Joey," said she, and sighed. " I am afraid it is not in my power."

She then raised herself a little in her bed, and discovered one of the whitest necks that ever was seen ; at which Joseph blushed. " La ! " says she, in an affected surprise, " what am I doing ? I have trusted myself with a man alone, naked in bed ; suppose you should have any wicked intentions upon my honour, how should I defend myself ? "

Joseph protested that he never had the least evil designs against her. " You misunderstand me," says she ; " I mean if they were against my honour, they may not be wicked ; but the world calls them so. Must not my reputation be then in your power ? Would you not then be my master ? "

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Joseph begged her ladyship to be comforted ; that he had rather die a thousand deaths than give her any reason to suspect him. " Yet," said she, " I must have reason to suspect you. Are you not a man ? And without vanity I may pretend to some charms. But perhaps you may fear I should prosecute you ; indeed I hope you do ; and yet heaven knows I should never have the confidence to appear before a court of justice ; and you know, Joey, I am of a forgiving temper. Tell me, do you think I should forgive you ? "

" Indeed, Madam," says Joseph, " I will never do anything to disoblige your ladyship." " How," says she, " do you think it would not disoblige me then ? Do you think I would willingly suffer you ? " " I don't understand you, Madam," says Joseph. " Don't you ? " said she, " then you are either a fool, or pretend to be so ; I find I was mistaken in you. So get you downstairs, and never let me see your face again ; your pretended innocence cannot impose on me."

HENRY FIELDING, 1707-1754, *Joseph Andrews*

Spring Fever

My desire is a stallion
That must have his mare,
My desire is a jaguar
Seeking his mate.
Your floating robe and your body,
Your eyes and your smile
Draw my desire to thee
As if your hands
Had passed chains
Through the rings of my ears
And dragged me
Even behind your feet,
As life draws breath
Desire draws me to thee.

From the Burmese of ASMAPOUR, *translated by* E. POWYS MATHERS

Sweet Reason

" Afraid ? " she asked. " At what ? At the Flaming Tinman ? Don't be afraid of him. He won't come back, and if he did . . ."

" I'm not afraid of the Flaming Tinman," he said.

" What, then, are you afraid of ? "

" The evil one."

" The evil one ? " said the girl, wonderingly. " Where is he ? "

" Coming upon me."

" Never heed," said the girl, " I'll stand by you."

GEORGE BORROW, 1803-1881, *Lavengro*

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Mirror ! Mirror !

Joseph sat, in the autumn of life,
And remembered the snare of Potiphar's wife . . .

His jewels gleamed in the light of the fire,
As he sat and remembered her foul desire ;
Her shameless eyes and her godless mouth
That burned like a blood-red rose of the south.

Her voice, as deep as a sunken bell,
Her hair as black as the brook of hell ;
Her ripe young breasts, and her supple hips,
And the words of love that fell from her lips :

" Come to my bed, O secret lover !
Come to my bed there's none can discover
The heart-hidden ecstasies of the night
When our limbs burn out in the flame of delight.

" My lord is forth on affairs of state.
There's none in the town can force the gate ;
There's none in the house can say us nay.
When the wolf is abroad, the lambs can play."

The clinkers fell from the dying fire,
While he sat and remembered her fierce desire
To lead him astray from the path he trod,
To lure him away from the love of God.

He felt like a man who fears to drown,
When he turned in his fright and struck her down ;
And her hands forbore to cling and clasp,
As he left his garment within her grasp.

And Joseph sat in the evening of life,
And remembered the charm of Potiphar's wife.
He looked at his greying hair in the glass,
As he murmured : " Lord, what a fool I was ! "

STEPHEN WILLIAMS

Ever Since Eve

Treat woman with indulgence. She was created out of a crooked rib, and even God could not make her entirely straight again.

GOETHE, 1749-1832

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ARABIAN NIGHT

An indomitable woman, Brunhild, one might almost have said indestructible

by NEIL McGAREL

MY cook's sister was eaten by a ghoul. It was largely her own fault, I gathered, because the whole village knew that a ghoul had taken to haunting the burial ground outside the nearby city of Tiz Nabadhi, and in common prudence she should have followed the Euphrates instead of taking the direct line home. But there it was.

What really seemed to worry my cook most was that, although enough had been found to identify her, it was alleged that no trace could be discovered of her silver and turquoise bangles, of which—she was a vain little thing—she had had an unusual number. Turquoises are worn to ward off evil influences, but perhaps hers were not the right kind. They were, however, of some value, and my cook suspected that his relations, or perhaps the neighbours, were defrauding him, so he asked for a month's leave to go south and "settle what is needful."

If you live in Babylon you become used to accepting strange stories without too much enquiry, so on hearing of the mishap I remarked noncommittally that Allah was compassionate and agreed to a fortnight's absence. Besides, Ahmad the Moth, who is Chief of Police in the city when a certain rather peculiar kind of government is in power (that is to say, for about three months of the year), tells me that ghouls are by no means so uncommon as uninstructed westerners suppose, and that five or six deaths a year, on an average, are officially ascribed to their malefic activities.

If it had been winter time, perhaps I should have been less willing to allow my excellent cook to go, but in the hot weather there is no need to give parties, and for my own requirements of curds and whey, eggs and typhoidal salads, my first boy was cook enough. Abd ur-Rahman departed, therefore, carrying his needments in fifteen ramshackle parcels and muttering curses (Allah between me and the Stoned One !) on evil spirits, grasping uncles, and, I fear, unsympathetic employers.

Next day I was doing a little cursing on my own account, for I had received a letter from my cousin Brunhild informing me

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that she was flying down from Teheran to Babylon for a four day visit, and commanding me to arrange a party on the most elaborate scale to enable her to renew her acquaintance with the notables of the country. She gave a list of the people whom she wished to meet—all men—and added kindly that I might ask a few of my friends also if I chose.

There was never much point in opposing Brunhild, and in the hot weather, which never affected her, I could not even contemplate the battle royal that would ensue if I attempted any evasion. On the other hand, I was properly stuck for a cook. All good cooks in Babylon drink, and I was fairly sure that any of those on the market would become incapably drunk before he was half way through the preparations for such a party as I had to arrange. I called my first boy into consultation, and he, though equal to almost any emergency, was not hopeful. However, I took the decisive step of sending out the invitations.

Here, perhaps, I should say something of my cousin Brunhild. From a very early age she had been known throughout the Middle East. Her father had been Consul in Aleppo and later in Tabriz, and her Arabic and Persian were both fluent and idiomatic. She also had a command of Kurdish, and was compiling a dictionary of that unaccommodating tongue, to which she proposed to append a short note on the chief tribal customs.

Her chief delight had always been to travel in the lesser known and more dangerous parts of Persia, Afghanistan and the Arab countries, enquiring into the ways of life, dialect and religion of the inhabitants with a persistence that made her survival little short of miraculous. Her translations of the poems of Abu Nuwas, Goha, Annan (the Arab Sappho) and others of the same school rendered the originals so exactly as to be unsuitable for general publication. And her book on the initiation rites of the Nabatæans would have been a revelation to the elders of that mild, riverain sect.

She was indomitable, indestructible, and appallingly ugly. She had lived for eighteen months with a tribe in the most remote part of Arabia Deserta, and had drawn a chart of the Rub'al Khali desert that was very like the map in the Hunting of The Snark, and just about as useful. Her only vanity, so far as I knew, lay in her Arab nickname, which meant, among other things, a female pelican. She was afraid of nothing except mice and not getting her own way.

So you can imagine that I was not a little disturbed when my first boy returned from his search to say that no reliable cook could be found. Even the standby engaged by all households for important occasions was out of action. He had made the

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mistake of accepting a permanent job at an enormous salary with the English Inspector-General of Camels; and his brother cooks, horrified at the loss of their assistant, had banded together to present him with five bottles of Arack on the day of the Inspector-General's first big party; when he had finished the fourth they laid him on the front steps for the Inspector-General to discover. Now he was in hospital.

Rapidly I drew up my plans to avert complete disaster. The Euphrates at Babylon is, in summer, dotted with low, sandy islands on which the Babylonians delight to picnic. You go out in boats, towing live fish on a string behind you, build fires, grill the fish, finishing them with a wildish sauce of onions, tomatoes, ghee, red peppers, and garlic, and then you eat with your fingers.

Such an entertainment has the merits of being simple to organize—the cook of the Military Club has an army of fish-grillers for hire—and charmingly typical of the country. But I knew that I should be regarded as exceptionally stingy if I provided no other entertainment, and I might even have my contract cancelled.

I am, I should perhaps explain, the official Physicist to the Babylonian Government, having been engaged some years ago by a progressive Minister of the Interior in error for a physician, and having retained favour with successive governments by my tolerance of certain corrupt activities, my readiness to do nothing whatsoever, and my innumerable parties. No other foreign expert has possessed these valuable recommendations, so I have a position all my own.

Two days before Brunhild was due to arrive, my Persian gardener asked to see me. He had brought with him a man of singularly repulsive appearance, dressed in the knitted cap and embroidered mohair jacket and trousers of the Babylonian Kurd, who he swore was his brother Baha ud-Din, a Persian and a first class cook. Normally a recommendation from my gardener, who is in reality an agent planted on me to steal my belongings and testify to malicious damage, would damn any applicant, but I was at my wit's end, so I told him to display his skill that night at dinner.

A Persian he was not—my first boy said he was a devil-worshipping Yezidi—but a first class cook he undoubtedly was. His *fasanjan* (duck braised in pomegranate syrup) was a revelation, and his Circassian chicken, with a sauce of pounded walnuts, was as delicate as a string quartet. I made only perfunctory enquiries into his antecedents—after all, I was interested in cooking, not character—and learnt that he had been brought from Persia by the Consul at Tiz Nabadhi, a city of which he showed some

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knowledge, and had been dismissed on that official's recall to Teheran.

Taking my courage in both hands, I explained my needs for the party and sent him off to the bazaar, under the escort of my first boy, to collect the best materials that could be obtained.

Evening in Babylon, especially in early summer, is a time of pure enchantment, when the dust, smells, squalling, and roguery of the rickety modern city are forgotten and the golden past comes flooding back in an ocean of wine-coloured light and blessed coolness.

It was at this magical moment that I led my first guests over the dry foreshore, temporarily cleansed of the usual defilements and strewn with rushes and bush-basil, to the little flotilla of row-boats moored where the current sets in deep and strong. The materials of the picnic had been ferried across some two hours earlier, insulated and iced according to their various needs, and were being set out on my best carpets at the northern end of the most attractive islet, from which all other picnickers had been barred by Ahmad's policemen.

The fish-grillers were waiting beside their piles of camel-thorn and chosen herbs, ready to set fire to them when the word was given; my first boy splendid in white robe, scarlet sash and purple slippers, was putting the last devastating touch to his cocktails, and the tribe of gipsies, whom I had engaged as entertainers, were squatting in a furtive huddle a little downstream; and as I stepped ashore I reflected that there was every prospect of a successful evening, provided that Brunhild behaved herself.

Alas! that condition seemed unlikely to be fulfilled. From the moment she set foot on Babylonian soil, the only passenger in the 'plane who had not been sick crossing the Hills of Ecbatana, it was apparent that she was in a mood of the most fiendish vitality. After saluting me with a sort of perfunctory cuff, her first act was to descend on the Ambassador and bully him into arranging an immediate audience with the Queen Mother. What went on in the Palace I do not know, but from Brunhild's air of triumph when she emerged, I feared that the secrets of the Royal Harem were secrets no longer.

In the afternoon, with the temperature at 105°, she insisted on being taken to the bazaars. I pleaded official work, and descended to the relative coolness of the cellar, handing her over to Captain Beaumarais, a fresh-faced youth from the Arab Centre of Middle East Studies, who had been sent to me to get a first-hand knowledge of conditions in Babylonia: after all, Englishwomen like my cousin form a striking feature of modern Babylonia, so he would not be wasting his time.

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When they returned some hours later, Brunhild was as lively as ever, but Beaumarais looked pale and slightly cowed. I gathered she had caused a thirty-foot Ardabil carpet worth two thousand sesterces to be spread out in the main thoroughfare, creating the most appalling confusion, and had argued over the price for three and a half hours. After she had beaten the merchant down to one thousand seven hundred sesterces, she had simply bought a pair of saddlebags, for the equivalent of three shillings, and the man had been so glad to get rid of her that he had given her a set of sham amber praying-beads, which she was carrying in triumph.

After she had washed, all too rapidly, we went to a cocktail party given in her honour by the British Club, where several things occurred that I am not likely to live down. And now, twenty four hours later, after another day of ceaseless activity, she had fastened on a member of the Ulema and was expounding to him in faultless Arabic the inner meaning of a disputed passage in the Hadith; he seemed to be praying under his breath.

However, I was in a mood of optimism. The evening breeze had sprung up, the moon was at her fourteenth night, the smell of spiced stew floating from my Kurd's cookpots was very inspiring, the Prime Minister had arrived early, smiling, and the open air absorbed the more Wagnerian qualities of Brunhild's remarkable voice. As the Minister of the Interior arrived, I whispered to him that the beautiful Saminah would be singing to us when her act at the Shahryar cabaret was over, and the look that he gave me was as good as a renewal of my contract.

Ahmad was there in full summer uniform; the ambassador, charitable man, was being gracious to Brunhild; four Ministers that no one had ever heard of came in together, followed by two Egyptian diplomats wearing tarbushes and broad smiles, the President of the Town Council, all the Foreign Advisers, the enormous Paramount Sheikh of the Beni Adham with a still more enormous bodyguard armed with a rifle and bandoliers of red and green tracer cartridges, some lesser sheikhs whose noble profiles seemed to have been carved from mahogany bedposts with a mallet, the Heads of the five Christian churches in Babylonia in wonderful hats, a vastly wealthy merchant speaking fluent American, diplomats chattering low French, civil servants and officials by the score—in short, everyone in Babylon who might conceivably be of some interest to Brunhild. And with them came their servants, their servants' relations and all the innumerable oddities who turn up at Babylonian junketings to claim a share in the leavings.

With the preparations all complete, and the guests safely

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landed on the island, you might have supposed that we could have sat down at once. But this would have been contrary to Babylonian tradition, which prescribes a wait of up to two hours, during which the guests walk, sit, talk, and drink whisky or sherbet. The Babylonian officials, of course, are almost all strict Moslems and are prohibited from drinking alcohol, but such are their native good manners that they all make a semblance of drinking when entertained by westerners, and most of them are expert at simulating the exhilarating effects of strong liquor, so by the time we squatted round the many-coloured heaps of food there was an animated rattle of conversation and laughter.

As I busied myself with my hospitable duties, tearing off the leg of a lamb for this guest, slicing the yellow fat of a sheep's tail for that one, pouring wine with appropriate quotations from the Khamryât and exchanging formal compliments of outrageous elaboration, I found myself calling down blessings on the superb skill of Baha ud-Din. Never was there such a cook! Arab, Persian and Syrian dishes were alike successful. From the opulence of the whole sheep, oozing an aromatic stuffing of almonds, spices and rice, to the exquisite fragility of rosewater pastry there was no faltering from perfection, no flagging of delicacy and invention. He must, I reflected, have committed some truly monstrous crime to be reduced to looking for temporary employment under the protection of my villainous gardener. I resolved to speak to Ahmad about it the very next day and arrange for an acquittal.

Eating at such functions occupies relatively little time, since politeness requires that everyone should attack the food as if starving, and it was not long before my servants were bearing away the platters to the waiting crowd of retainers and hangers-on, and I was moving among my guests, receiving their compliments with a sense of triumph. I was especially gratified by the sincerity and spontaneity with which the Prime Minister, more gourmet than statesman, and more gourmand than either, belched as I passed near him.

Brunhild, whose manners were of the desert rather than the diwan, had greased herself to the elbows in her inroads on the scented pilaws, and as my second boy poured rosewater for her, she called over the heads of the crowd: "You may be a rotten scientist, and Heaven knows you're crooked, but you do know how to give a party. If I were Scheherazade I'd have you for my chief eunuch." I bowed to the gusts of her laughter and passed on.

The party broke up into little groups, each one gravitating towards one of the huge bonfires that joined with the moonlight to provide our illumination. At one of these the gipsies, dwarfish

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of stature, but unbelievably supple, were dancing with gestures more eloquent than speech to the music of lutes and tom-toms. At another the Ambassador was reviving memories of the last war but one with the sad-eyed little man who really governs the country when not occupied with business deals abroad.

By the silver edge of the water, Saminah, the most famous singer of Babylonia, was vocalizing the name Ali in a wavering jet of excruciating sound, while the Minister of the Interior, whose first name happened to be Ali, was approving wildly and exclaiming "Allah!" at each twist of the intricate melody. The desert sheikhs, wearing an expression of the deepest disapproval, were deriving an even more intense enjoyment from the performance.

Down at the southern end of the spit the policemen, the boatmen and the servants, who were of the class that derives as much intoxication from food as others do from liquor, were stimulating appetite and digestion by an impromptu torch dance that would have frightened the Choctaws. A truly successful party! I turned towards the embers of the cooking fires to look for my wonderful cook and congratulate him.

I found him thoughtfully scraping an enormous cauldron and humming a melancholy ditty. My Kurdish does not go very far, but I contrived a compliment that made his lean and murky face break into a smile, and then I expressed the hope in Arabic that he, too, had eaten his fill of the dainties that he had prepared.

"No," he said, his eyes wandering strangely over the assembly, "I shall take my food in my own time."

"May it be delicious in the digestion," I replied, which made him show his long yellow teeth again, as I turned back towards my duties.

Things were still going admirably, and I doubted whether we should leave before dawn. I was just beginning to look for some of the friends whom Brunhild had permitted me to ask, so as to relax and find some enjoyment myself, when she bore down on me in person, thrusting aside the Hydraulic Adviser, whom she had been instructing how to divert the Gihon into the desert. "I want to have a word with your cook," she cried. "They tell me he is a Kurd, but he puts no asafetida into his stews, and I must find out why. All the Kurds I know use it to drive off Iblis, and if he doesn't he must be from a tribe I don't know. It may be important for my book. After that I shall have a swim; I see some of them have gone in already."

Murmuring something about bathing after a heavy meal, I pointed towards the dark figure by the dying fires. She swept on, and I, sighing with relief, relapsed into the company of the engag-

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ingly dissolute small fry with whom I feel so much at home. It was going to be a delightful evening after all.

None of us knew when the tragedy occurred. I myself was most agreeably occupied until dawn, and then as I looked around somewhat blearily over the litter left by the departing guests I realized that my cousin was nowhere to be seen. She had not gone ashore in the boats, nor could I believe that she had swum across and gone to bed.

Back at my house, when I had confirmed that she had not returned, I marshalled my servants for an enquiry, and noticed with a slight shock that my cook, who had certainly come ashore with us, was now missing too. They could hardly have gone off to Kurdistan together, and yet there seemed to be no other explanation, nor has any satisfactory solution to the mystery been offered till this day.

The papers in Babylonia and in England reported that she had been seen diving from a boat and that she was presumed to have got stuck in a mud bank and drowned, but this story and that of the heroic efforts made to rescue her were fabricated by Ahmad and myself when all our enquiries had proved fruitless. What really is rather curious is that when my permanent cook came back from the south he discovered in the bed that had been occupied by his temporary substitute a little collection of silver and turquoise bangles, which he swore were those worn by his sister.

And with them was a string of sham amber praying beads, such as can be obtained anywhere in the bazaar.

* * *

ANSWERS to TRAVELLERS' JOY on page 62

1. *John Gilpin, in "The Diverting History of John Gilpin," by William Cowper.*
2. *The pilot Hervé Riel, who saved the French fleet from the pursuing British in the poem "Hervé Riel," by Robert Browning.*
3. *Antigonus, abandoning the infant Perdita, in "A Winter's Tale," by William Shakespeare.*
4. *"The aged, aged man," in "Through the Looking Glass," by Lewis Carroll.*
5. *Jerry Cruncher, in "A Tale of Two Cities," by Charles Dickens.*
6. *Lochinvar, in the ballad "Lochinvar," from "Marmion," by Sir Walter Scott.*
7. *The Jumblies, in the poem "The Jumblies," by Edward Lear.*
8. *Don Quixote, in the "Adventures of Don Quixote," by Cervantes.*
9. *Christian Evans, in "The China Run," by Neil Paterson.*
10. *Becky Sharp, in "Vanity Fair," by William Makepeace Thackeray.*

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★*The name of Rudyard Kipling will bring back to many of our older readers nostalgic memories of a lost world. The march of time and a second world war have swept away many of the familiar landmarks in the Imperial Inde where Kipling was born, and where he lived a great part of his life. And over the years he himself has suffered a partial eclipse.*

But the writer was the man, and the qualities he stood for —personal courage, doggedness, self sufficiency, an unflagging sense of humour, as well as a certain complacency—these remain constant. And even his most biased antagonists, while they oppose the way of life he represents, cannot deny his superb literary craftsmanship.

No one has ever surpassed Kipling's mastery of the short story. Of the neat, quick twist of humour—or horror, that is perhaps the supreme test in this genre. And no one since Kipling has produced anything quite like the whimsicality of the Just So Stories, or the exuberance of a Stalky and Co.

He wrote prodigiously—novels, poetry, drama—all remarkably expert, colourful and full of memorable lines and catch phrases. And here, recorded with warmth and humour by this master of his craft, is—

THE MALTESE CAT

by RUDYARD KIPLING

THEY had good reason to be proud, and better reason to be afraid, all twelve of them; for though they had fought their way, game by game, up the teams entered for the polo tournament, they were meeting the Archangels that afternoon in the final match; and the Archangels men were playing with half a dozen ponies apiece.

As the game was divided into six quarters of eight minutes each, that meant a fresh pony after every halt. The Skidars' team, even supposing there were no accidents, could only supply one pony for every other change; and two to one is heavy odds.

Again, as Shiraz, the grey Syrian, pointed out, they were meeting the pink and pick of the polo ponies of Upper India, ponies that had cost from a thousand rupees each, while they themselves were a cheap lot gathered, often from country carts, by their masters, who belonged to a poor but honest native infantry regiment.

"Money means pace and weight," said Shiraz, rubbing his

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black-silk nose dolefully along his neat-fitting boot, "and by the maxims of the game as I know it—"

"Ah, but we aren't playing the maxims," said The Maltese Cat. "We're playing the game; and we've the great advantage of knowing the game. Just think a stride, Shiraz! We've pulled up from bottom to second place in two weeks against all these fellows because we play with our heads as well as our feet."

"It makes me feel unhappy all the same," said Kittiwynk, a mouse-coloured mare with a red brow-band and the cleanest pair of legs that ever an aged pony owned. "They've twice our style."

Kittiwynk looked at the gathering and sighed. The hard, dusty polo ground was lined with thousands of soldiers, black and white, not counting hundreds and hundreds of carriages and drags and dog-carts, and ladies with brilliant coloured parasols, and officers in uniform and out of it, and crowds of natives behind them; and orderlies on camels, who had halted to watch the game, instead of carrying letters up and down the station; and native horse dealers running about on thin-eared Biluchi mares, looking for a chance to sell a few first-class polo ponies.

Then there were the ponies of thirty teams that had entered for the Upper India Free-for-All Cup—nearly every pony of worth and dignity, from Mhow to Peshawar, from Allahabad to Multan; prize ponies, Arabs, Syrian, Barb, countrybred, Deccanee, Waziri, and Kabul ponies of every colour and shape and temper that you could imagine. Some of them were in mat-roofed stables, close to the polo ground, but most were under saddle, while their masters, who had been defeated in the earlier games, trotted in and out and told the world exactly how the game should be played.

It was a glorious sight, and the come and go of the little, quick hoofs, and the incessant salutations of ponies that had met before on other polo grounds or racecourses were enough to drive a four-footed thing wild. But the Skidars' team were careful not to know their neighbours, though half the ponies on the ground were anxious to scrape acquaintance with the little fellows that had come from the North, and, so far, had swept the board.

"Let's see," said a soft gold-coloured Arab, who had been playing very badly the day before, to The Maltese Cat; "didn't we meet in Abdul Rahman's stable in Bombay, four seasons ago? I won the Paikpattan Cup next season, you may remember?"

"Not me," said The Maltese Cat, politely. "I was at Malta then, pulling a vegetable cart. I don't race. I play the game."

"Oh!" said the Arab, cocking his tail and swaggering off.

"Keep yourselves to yourselves," said The Maltese Cat to his companions. "We don't want to rub noses with all those goose-rumped half-breeds of Upper India. When we've won this

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Cup they'll give their shoes to know *us*."

"We shan't win the Cup," said Shiraz. "How do you feel?"

"Stale as last night's feed when a musk rat has run over it," said Polaris, a rather heavy-shouldered grey; and the rest of the team agreed with him.

"The sooner you forget that the better," said The Maltese Cat, cheerfully. "They've finished tiffin in the big tent. We shall be wanted now. If your saddles are not comfy, kick. If your bits aren't easy, rear, and let the *saises* know about it."

Each pony had his *sais*, his groom, who lived and ate and slept with the animal, and had betted a good deal more than he could afford on the result of the game. There was no chance of anything going wrong, but to make sure, each *sais* was shampooing the legs of his pony to the last minute.

Behind the *saises* sat as many of the Skidars' regiment as had leave to attend the match—about half the native officers, and a hundred or two dark, black-bearded men with the regimental pipers nervously fingering the big, beribboned bagpipes.

The native officers held bundles of polo sticks, long cane-handled mallets, and as the grandstand filled after lunch they arranged themselves by ones and twos at different points round the ground, so that if a stick were broken the player would not have far to ride for a new one. An impatient British Cavalry Band struck up "*If you want to know the time, ask a p'leeceman!*" and the two umpires in light dustcoats danced out on two little excited ponies. The four players of the Archangels' team followed, and the sight of their beautiful mounts made Shiraz groan again.

"Wait till we know," said the Maltese Cat. "Two of 'em are playing in blinkers, and that means they can't see to get out of the way of their own side, or they *may* shy at the umpires' ponies. They've *all* got white web-reins that are sure to stretch or slip!"

"And," said Kittiwynk, dancing to take the stiffness out of her, "they carry their whips in their hands instead of on their wrists. Hah!"

"True enough. No man can manage his stick and his reins and his whip that way," said The Maltese Cat. "I've fallen over every square yard of the Malta ground, and I ought to know."

He quivered his little fleabitten withers just to show how satisfied he felt; but his heart was not so light. Ever since he had drifted into India on a troopship, taken, with an old rifle, as part payment for a racing debt, The Maltese Cat had played and preached polo to the Skidars' team on this stony polo ground.

Now a polo pony is like a poet. If he is born with a love for the game, he can be made. The Maltese Cat knew that bamboos grew solely in order that polo balls might be turned from their

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roots, that grain was given to ponies to keep them in hard condition and that ponies were shod to prevent them slipping on a turn.

But, besides all these things, he knew every trick and device of the finest game in the world, and for two seasons had been teaching the others all he knew or guessed.

"Remember," he said for the hundredth time, as the riders came up, "you *must* play together, and you *must* play with your heads. Whatever happens, follow the ball. Who goes out first?"

Kittiwynk, Shiraz, Polaris, and a short high little bay fellow with tremendous hocks and no withers worth speaking of (he was called Corks) were being girthed up, and the soldiers in the background stared with all their eyes.

"I want you men to keep quiet," said Lutyens, the captain of the team, "and especially not to blow your pipes."

'Not if we win, Captain Sahib?" asked the piper.

"If we win you can do what you please," said Lutyens, with a smile, as he slipped the loop of his stick over his wrist, and wheeled to canter to his place. The Archangels' ponies were a little bit above themselves on account of the many-coloured crowd so close to the ground. Their riders were excellent players, but they were a team of crack players instead of a crack team; and that made all the difference in the world. They honestly meant to play together, but it is very hard for four men, each the best of the team he is picked from, to remember that in polo no brilliancy in hitting or riding makes up for playing alone.

Their captain shouted his orders to them by name, and it is a curious thing that if you call an Englishman's name aloud in public you make him hot and fretty. Lutyens said nothing to his men; it had all been said before. He pulled up Shiraz, for he was playing "back," to guard the goal. Powell on Polaris was half-back, and Macnamara and Hughes on Corks and Kittiwynk were forwards.

The tough bamboo ball was set in the middle of the ground, one hundred and fifty yards from the ends, and Hughes crossed sticks, heads up, with the Captain of the Archangels, who saw fit to play forward—a place from which you cannot easily control your team. The little click as the cane-shafts met was heard all over the ground, and then Hughes made some sort of quick wrist stroke that just dribbled the ball a few yards.

Kittiwynk knew that stroke of old, and followed as a cat follows a mouse. While the Captain of the Archangels was wrenching his pony round, Hughes struck with all his strength, and next instant Kittiwynk was away, Corks following close behind her, their little feet pattering like raindrops on glass.

"Pull out to the left," said Kittiwynk between her teeth; "it's coming your way, Corks!"

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The back and half-back of the Archangels were tearing down on her just as she was within reach of the ball. Hughes leaned forward with a loose rein, and cut it away to the left almost under Kittiwynk's foot, and it hopped and skipped off to Corks, who saw that, if he was not quick it would run beyond the boundaries. That long bouncing drive gave the Archangels time to wheel and send three men across the ground to head off Corks.

Kittiwynk stayed where she was; for she knew the game. Corks was on the ball half a fraction of a second before the others came up, and Macnamara, with a backhanded stroke, sent it back across the ground to Hughes, who saw the way clear to the Archangels' goal, and smacked the ball in before anyone quite knew what had happened.

"That's luck," said Corks, as they changed ends. "A goal in three minutes for three hits, and no riding to speak of."

"Don't know," said Polaris. "We've made 'em angry now. Shouldn't wonder if they tried to rush us off our feet next time."

"Keep the ball hanging, then," said Shiraz. "That wears out every pony that is not used to it."

Next time there was no easy galloping across the ground. All the Archangels closed up as one man, but there they stayed, for Corks, Kittiwynk, and Polaris were somewhere on the top of the ball, marking time among the rattling sticks, while Shiraz circled about outside, waiting for a chance.

"We can do this all day," said Polaris, ramming his quarters into another pony. "Where do you think you're shoving to?"

"I'll—I'll be driven in an *ekka* if I know," was the gasping reply, "and I'd give a week's feed to get my blinkers off. I can't see anything."

"The dust is rather bad. Whew! That was one for my off-hock. Where's the ball, Corks?"

"Under my tail. At least, the man's looking for it there! This is beautiful. They can't use their sticks, and it's driving 'em wild. Give old Blinkers a push and then he'll go over."

"Here, don't touch me! I can't see. I'll—I'll back out, I think," said the pony in blinkers, who was sorely tried.

Corks was watching the ball where it lay in the dust, close to his near fore-leg, with Macnamara's shortened stick tap-tapping it from time to time. Kittiwynk was edging her way out of the scrimmage, whisking her stump of a tail with nervous excitement.

"Ho! They've got it," she snorted. "Let me out!" and she galloped like a rifle bullet just behind a tall lanky pony of the Archangels, whose rider was swinging up his stick for a stroke.

"Not today, thank you," said Hughes, as the blow slid off his raised stick, and Kittiwynk laid her shoulder to the tall pony's

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quarters, and shoved him aside just as Lutyens on Shiraz sent the ball back, and the tall pony went skating and slipping away to the left. Kittiwynk, seeing that Polaris had joined Corks in the chase after the ball, dropped into Polaris' place; then "time" was called.

The Skidars' ponies wasted no time in kicking or fuming. They knew that each minute's rest meant so much gain, and trotted off to the rails, and their *saises* began to scrape and blanket and rub them at once.

"Whew!" said Corks, stiffening up to the big vulcanite scraper. "If we were playing pony for pony, we would bend those Archangels double in half an hour. But they'll bring up fresh ones and fresh ones and fresh ones after that—you see."

"Who cares?" said Polaris. "We've drawn first blood. Is my hock swelling?"

"Looks puffy," said Corks. "You must have had rather a wipe. Don't let it stiffen. You'll be wanted again soon."

"What's the game like?" said The Maltese Cat.

"Ground's like your shoe, except where they put too much water on it," said Kittiwynk. "Then it's slippery. Don't play in the centre. There's a bog there. I don't know how their next four are going to behave, but we kept the ball hanging, and made 'em lather for nothing. Who goes out? Two Arabs and a couple of countrybreds! That's bad. What a comfort it is to wash your mouth out!"

"What's bad?" said Grey Dawn, giving to the girth and admiring his well-set shoulders.

"You Arabs can't gallop fast enough to keep yourselves warm—that's what Kitty means," said Polaris, limping to show that his hock needed attention. "Are you playing back, Grey Dawn?"

"Looks like it," said Grey Dawn, as Lutyens swung himself up. Powell mounted The Rabbit, a plain bay countrybred much like Corks, but with mulish ears. Macnamara took Faiz-Ullah, a handy, short-backed little red Arab with a long tail, and Hughes mounted Benami, an old and sullen brown beast, who stood over in front more than a polo pony should.

"Benami looks like business," said Shiraz. "How's your temper, Ben?" The old campaigner hobbled off without answering, and The Maltese Cat looked at the new Archangel ponies prancing about on the ground. They were four beautiful blacks, and they saddled big enough and strong enough to eat the Skidars' team and gallop away with the meal inside them.

"Blinkers again," said The Maltese Cat. "Good enough!"

"They're chargers—cavalry chargers!" said Kittiwynk, indignantly. "*They'll* never see thirteen-three again."

"They've all been fairly measured, and they've all got their

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certificates," said The Maltese Cat, "or they wouldn't be here. We must take things as they come. Keep your eyes on the ball."

The game began, but this time the Skidars were penned to their own end of the ground, and the watching ponies did not approve of that.

"Faiz-Ullah is shirking—as usual," said Polaris, with a scornful grunt.

"Faiz-Ullah is eating whip," said Corks. They could hear the leather-thonged polo-quirt lacing the little fellow's flanks Then The Rabbit's shrill neigh came across the ground.

"I can't do all the work," he cried desperately.

"Play the game—don't talk," The Maltese Cat whickered; and all the ponies wriggled with excitement, and the soldiers and the grooms gripped the railings and shouted.

A black pony with blinkers had singled out old Benami, and was interfering with him in every possible way. They could see Benami shaking his head up and down, and flapping his under-lip.

"There'll be a fall in a minute," prophesied Polaris.

The game flickered up and down between goal-post and goal-post, and the black ponies were getting more confident as they felt they had the legs of the others. The ball was hit out of a little scrimmage, and Benami and The Rabbit followed it, Faiz-Ullah only too glad to be quiet for an instant.

The blinkered black pony came up like a hawk, with two of his own side behind him, and Benami's eye glittered as he raced. The question was which pony should make way for the other, for each rider was perfectly willing to risk a fall in a good cause. The black, who had been driven nearly crazy by his blinkers, trusted to his weight and his temper; but Benami knew how to apply his weight and how to keep his temper.

They met, and there was a cloud of dust. The black was lying on his side, all the breath knocked out of his body. The Rabbit was a hundred yards up the ground with the ball, and Benami was sitting down. He had slid nearly ten yards on his tail, but he had had his revenge, and sat cracking his nostrils till the black pony rose.

"That's what you get for interfering. Do you want any more?" said Benami, and he plunged into the game. Nothing was done that quarter, because Faiz-Ullah would not gallop, though Macnamara beat him whenever he could spare a second.

The fall of the black pony had impressed his companions tremendously, and so the Archangels could not profit by Faiz-Ullah's bad behaviour. But as The Maltese Cat said when "time" was called, and the four came back blowing and dripping, Faiz-Ullah ought to have been kicked all round Umballa. If he did not behave

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better next time, The Maltese Cat promised to pull out his Arab tail by the roots and—eat it.

There was no time to talk, for the third four were ordered out. The third quarter of a game is generally the hottest, for each side thinks that the others must be pumped; and most of the winning play in a game is made about that time.

Lutyens took over The Maltese Cat with a pat and a hug, for Lutyens valued him more than anything else in the world; Powell had Shikast, a little grey rat with no pedigree and no manners outside polo; Macnamara mounted Bamboo, the largest of the team; and Hughes Who's Who, alias The Animal. He was supposed to have Australian blood in his veins, but he looked like a clothes-horse, and you could whack his legs with an iron crow-bar without hurting him. They went out to meet the very flower of the Archangels' team; and when Who's Who saw their elegantly-booted legs and their beautiful satin skins, he grinned a grin through his light, well-worn bridle.

"My word!" said Who's Who. "We must give 'em a little football. These gentlemen need a rubbing down."

"No biting," said The Maltese Cat, warningly; for once or twice in his career Who's Who had been known to forget himself in that way.

"Who said anything about biting? I'm not playing tiddly-winks. I'm playing the game."

The Archangels came down like a wolf on the fold, for they were tired of football; they wanted polo. They got it and more.

Just after the game began, Lutyens hit a ball that was coming towards him rapidly, and it rolled in the air, as a ball sometimes will, with the whirr of a frightened partridge. Shikast heard, but could not see it for the minute, though he looked everywhere and up into the air as The Maltese Cat had taught him. When he saw it ahead and overhead, he went forward with Powell as fast as he could put foot to ground. It was then that Powell, a quiet and level-headed man, as a rule, became inspired, and played a stroke that sometimes comes off successfully after long practice. He took his stick in both hands, and, standing up in his stirrups, swiped at the ball in the air, Munipore fashion.

There was one second of paralysed astonishment, and then all four sides of the ground went up in a yell of applause and delight as the ball flew true (you could see the amazed Archangels ducking in their saddles to dodge the line of flight, and looking at it with open mouths), and the regimental pipes of the Skidars squealed from the railings as long as the pipers had breath.

Shikast heard the stroke; but he heard the head of the stick

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fly off at the same time. Nine hundred and ninety nine ponies out of a thousand would have gone tearing on after the ball with a useless player pulling at their heads; but Powell knew him, and he knew Powell; and the instant he felt Powell's right leg shift a trifle on the saddle-flap, he headed to the boundary, where a native officer was frantically waving a new stick. Before the shouts had ended, Powell was armed again.

Once before in his life The Maltese Cat had heard that very same stroke played off his own back, and had profited by the confusion it wrought. This time he acted on experience, and leaving Bamboo to guard the goal in case of accidents, came through the others like a flash, head and tail low—Lutyens standing up to ease him—swept on and on before the other side knew what was the matter, and nearly pitched on his head between the Archangels' goal-post as Lutyens kicked the ball in after a straight scurry of a hundred and fifty yards.

If there was one thing more than another upon which The Maltese Cat prided himself, it was on this quick, streaking kind of run half across the ground. He did not believe in taking balls round the field unless you were clearly overmatched. After this they gave the Archangels five-minuted football; and an expensive fast pony hates football because it rumples his temper.

Who's Who showed himself even better than Polaris in this game. He did not permit any wriggling away, but bored joyfully into the scrimmage as if he had his nose in a feed-box and was looking for something nice. Little Shikast jumped on the ball the minute it got clear, and every time an Archangel pony followed it, he found Shikast standing over it, asking what was the matter.

"If we can live through this quarter," said The Maltese Cat, "I shan't care. Don't take it out of yourselves. Let them do the lathering."

So the ponies, as their riders explained afterwards, "shut-up." The Archangels kept them tied fast in front of their goal, but it cost the Archangels' ponies all that was left of their tempers; and ponies began to kick, and men began to repeat compliments, and they chopped at the legs of Who's Who, and he set his teeth and stayed where he was, and the dust stood up like a tree over the scrimmage until that hot quarter ended.

They found the ponies very excited and confident when they went to their *saises;* and The Maltese Cat had to warn them that the worst of the game was coming.

"Now *we* are all going in for the second time," said he, "and *they* are trotting out fresh ponies. You think you can gallop, but you'll find you can't; and then you'll be sorry."

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"But two goals is a halter-long lead," said Kittiwynk, prancing.

"How long does it take to get a goal?" The Maltese Cat answered. "For pity's sake, don't run away with a notion that the game is half-won just because we happen to be in luck *now!* They'll ride you into the grandstand, if they can; you must not give 'em a chance. Follow the ball."

"Football, as usual?" said Polaris. "My hock's half as big as a nosebag."

"Don't let them have a look at the ball, if you can help it. Now leave me alone. I must get all the rest I can before the last quarter." He hung down his head and let all his muscles go slack, Shikast, Bamboo, and Who's Who copying his example.

"Better not watch the game," he said. "We aren't playing, and we shall only take it out of ourselves if we grow anxious. Look at the ground and pretend it's fly-time."

They did their best, but it was hard advice to follow. The hoofs were drumming and the sticks were rattling all up and down the ground, and yells of applause from the English troops told that the Archangels were pressing the Skidars hard.

The native soldiers behind the ponies groaned and grunted, and said things in undertones, and presently they heard a long-drawn shout and a clatter of hurrahs!

"One to the Archangels," said Shikast, without raising his head. "Time's nearly up. Oh, my sire—and *dam!*"

"Faiz-Ullah," said The Maltese Cat, "if you don't play to the last nail in your shoes this time, I'll kick you on the ground before all the other ponies."

"I'll do my best when my time comes," said the little Arab sturdily.

The *saises* looked at each other gravely as they rubbed their ponies' legs. This was the time when long purses began to tell, and everybody knew it. Kittiwynk and the others came back, the sweat dripping over their hoofs and their tails telling sad stories.

"They're better than we are," said Shiraz. "I knew how it would be."

"Shut your big head," said The Maltese Cat; "we've one goal to the good yet."

"Yes; but it's two Arabs and two countrybreds to play now," said Corks. "Faiz-Ullah, remember!" He spoke in a biting voice.

As Lutyens mounted Grey Dawn he looked at his men, and they did not look pretty. They were covered with dust and sweat in streaks. Their yellow boots were almost black, their wrists were red and lumpy, and their eyes seemed two inches deep in their heads; but the expression in the eyes was satisfactory.

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"Did you take anything at tiffin?" said Lutyens; and the team shook their heads. They were too dry to talk.

"All right. The Archangels did. They are worse pumped than we are."

"They've got the better ponies," said Powell. "I shan't be sorry when this business is over."

That fifth quarter was a painful one in every way. Faiz-Ullah played like a little red demon, and The Rabbit seemed to be everywhere at once, and Benami rode straight at anything and everything that came in his way; while the umpires on their ponies wheeled like gulls outside the shifting game.

But the Archangels had the better mounts—they had kept their racers till now—and never allowed the Skidars to play football. They hit the ball up and down the width of the ground till Benami and the rest were outpaced. Then they went forward, and time and again Lutyens and Grey Dawn were just, and only just, able to send the ball away with a long, spitting backhander.

Grey Dawn forgot that he was an Arab; and turned from grey to blue as he galloped. Indeed, he forgot too well, for he did not keep his eyes on the ground as an Arab should, but stuck out his nose and scuttled for the dear honour of the game.

They had watered the ground once or twice between the quarters, and a careless waterman had emptied the last of his skinful all in one place near the Skidars' goal. It was close to the end of the play, and for the tenth time Grey Dawn was bolting after the ball, when his near hind-foot slipped on the greasy mud, and he rolled over and over, pitching Lutyens just clear of the goal-post; and the triumphant Archangels made their goal. Then "time" was called—two goals all; but Lutyens had to be helped up, and Grey Dawn rose with his near hind-leg strained somewhere.

"What's the damage?" said Powell, his arm around Lutyens.

"Collarbone, of course," said Lutyens, between his teeth. It was the third time he had broken it in two years, and it hurt him.

Powell and the others whistled.

"Game's up," said Hughes.

"Hold on. We've five good minutes yet, and it isn't my right hand. We'll stick it out."

"I say," said the Captain of the Archangels, trotting up, "are you hurt, Lutyens? We'll wait if you care to put in a substitute. The fact is, you fellows deserve this game if any team does. Wish we could give you a man, or some of our ponies—or something."

"You're awfully good, but we'll play it to a finish, I think."

The Captain of the Archangels stared for a little. "That's not half bad," he said, and went back to his own side, while Lutyens

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borrowed a scarf from one of his native officers and made a sling of it. Then an Archangel galloped up with a big bath sponge, and advised Lutyens to put it under his armpit to ease his shoulder, and between them they tied up his left arm scientifically; and one of the native officers leaped forward with four long glasses that fizzed and bubbled. The team looked at Lutyens piteously, and he nodded. It was the last quarter, and nothing would matter after that. They drank out the dark golden drink, and wiped their moustaches, and things looked more hopeful.

The Maltese Cat had put his nose into the front of Lutyens' shirt and was trying to say how sorry he was.

"He knows," said Lutyens, proudly. "The beggar knows. I've played him without a bridle before now—for fun."

"It's no fun now," said Powell. "But we haven't a decent substitute."

"No," said Lutyens. "It's the last quarter, and we've got to make our goal and win. I'll trust The Cat."

"If you fall this time, you'll suffer a little," said Macnamara.

"I'll trust The Cat," said Lutyens.

"You hear that?" said The Maltese Cat, proudly, to the others. "It's worth while playing polo for ten years to have that said of you. Now then, my sons, come along. We'll kick up a little bit, just to show the Archangels this team haven't suffered."

And, sure enough, as they went on to the ground, The Maltese Cat, after satisfying himself that Lutyens was home in the saddle, kicked out three or four times, and Lutyens laughed. The reins were caught up anyhow in the tips of his strapped left hand, and he never pretended to rely on them. He knew The Cat would answer to the least pressure of the leg, and by way of showing off—for his shoulder hurt him very much—he bent the little fellow in a close figure-of-eight in and out between the goal-posts.

There was a roar from the native officers and men, who dearly loved a piece of *dugabashi* (horse-trick work), as they called it, and the pipes very quietly and scornfully droned out the first bars of a common bazaar tune called "*Freshly Fresh and Newly New*," just as a warning to the other regiments that the Skidars were fit. All the natives laughed.

"And now," said The Maltese Cat, as they took their place, "remember that this is the last quarter, and follow the ball!"

"Don't need to be told," said Who's Who.

"Let me go on. All those people on all four sides will begin to crowd in—just as they did at Malta. You'll hear people calling out, and moving forward and being pushed back; and that is going to make the Archangel ponies very unhappy. But if a ball

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is struck to the boundary, you go after it, and let the people get out of your way. I went over the pole of a four-in-hand once, and picked a game out of the dust by it. Back me up when I run, and follow the ball."

There was a sort of an all-round sound of sympathy and wonder as the last quarter opened, and then there began exactly what The Maltese Cat had foreseen. People crowded in close to the boundaries, and the Archangels' ponies kept looking sideways at the narrowing space.

If you know how a man feels to be cramped at tennis—not because he wants to run out of the court but because he likes to know that he can at a pinch—you will guess how ponies must feel when they are playing in a box of human beings.

"I'll bend some of those men if I can get away," said Who's Who, as he rocketed behind the ball; and Bamboo nodded without speaking. They were playing the last ounce in them, and The Maltese Cat had left the goal undefended to join them. Lutyens gave him every order that he could to bring him back, but this was the first time in his career that the little wise grey had ever played polo on his own responsibility, and he was going to make the most of it.

"What are you doing here?" said Hughes, as The Cat crossed in front of him and rode off an Archangel.

"The Cat's in charge—mind the goal!" shouted Lutyens, and, bowing forward, hit the ball full, and followed on, forcing the Archangels towards their own goal.

"No football," said The Maltese Cat. "Keep the ball by the boundaries and cramp 'em. Play open order, and drive 'em to the boundaries."

Across and across the ground in big diagonals flew the ball, and whenever it came to a flying rush and a stroke close to the boundaries the Archangel ponies moved stiffly. They did not care to go headlong at a wall of men and carriages, though if the ground had been open they could have turned on a sixpence.

"Wriggle her up the sides," said The Cat. "Close to the crowd. They hate the carriages. Shikast, keep her up this side."

Shikast and Powell lay left and right behind the uneasy scuffle of an open scrimmage, and every time the ball was hit away Shikast galloped on it at such an angle that Powell was forced to hit it towards the boundary; and when the crowd had been driven away from that side, Lutyens would send the ball over to the other, and Shikast would slide desperately after it till his friends came down to help. It was billiards, and no football, this time—billiards in a corner pocket; and the cues were not well chalked.

"If they get us out in the middle of the ground they'll walk

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away from us. Dribble along the sides," cried The Maltese Cat.

So they dribbled all along the boundary, where a pony could not come on their right-hand side; and the Archangels were furious, and the umpires had to neglect the game to shout at the people to get back, and several blundering mounted policemen tried to restore order, all close to the scrimmage, and the nerves of the Archangels' ponies stretched and broke like cobwebs.

Five or six times an Archangel hit the ball up into the middle of the ground, and each time the watchful Shikast gave Powell his chance to send it back, and after each return, when the dust settled, men could see the Skidars had gained a few yards.

Every now and again there were shouts of "Side! Off side!" from the spectators; but the teams were too busy to care, and the umpires had all they could do to keep their maddened ponies clear of the scuffle.

At last Lutyens missed a short, easy stroke, and the Skidars had to fly back helter-skelter to protect their own goal, Shikast leading. Powell stopped the ball with a backhander when it was not fifty yards from the goal-posts, and Shikast spun round with a wrench that nearly hoisted Powell out of his saddle.

"Now's our last chance," said The Cat, wheeling like a cock-chafer on a pin. "We've got to ride it out. Come along."

Lutyens felt the little chap take a deep breath, and, as it were, crouch under his rider. The ball was hopping towards the right-hand boundary, an Archangel riding for it with both spurs and a whip; but neither spur nor whip would make his pony stretch himself as he neared the crowd. The Maltese Cat glided under his very nose, picking up his hind-legs sharp, for there was not a foot to spare between his quarters and the other pony's bit.

It was as neat an exhibition as fancy figure-skating. Lutyens hit with all the strength he had left, but the stick slipped a little in his hand, and the ball flew off to the left instead of keeping close to the boundary. Who's Who was far across the ground, thinking hard as he galloped. He repeated stride for stride The Cat's manœuvres with another Archangel pony, nipping the ball away from under his bridle, and clearing his opponent by half a fraction of an inch, for Who's Who was clumsy behind.

Then he drove away towards the right as The Maltese Cat came up from the left; and Bamboo held a middle course exactly between them. The three were making a sort of Government-broad-arrow-shaped attack; and there was only the Archangels' back to guard the goal; but immediately behind them were three Archangels racing all they knew, and mixed up with them was Powell sending Shikast along on what he felt was their last hope.

It takes a very good man to stand up to the rush of seven crazy

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ponies in the last quarters of a Cup game, when men are riding with their necks for sale, and the ponies are delirious. The Archangels' back missed his stroke and pulled aside just in time to let the rush go by.

Bamboo and Who's Who shortened stride to give The Cat room, and Lutyens got the goal with a clean, smooth, smacking stroke that was heard all over the field. But there was no stopping the ponies. They poured through the goal-posts in one mixed mob, winners and losers together, for the pace had been terrific.

The Maltese Cat knew by experience what would happen, and, to save Lutyens, turned to the right with one last effort, that strained a back-sinew beyond hope of repair. As he did so, he heard the right-hand goal-post crack as a pony cannoned into it—crack, splinter and fall like a mast. It had been sawed three parts through in case of accidents, but it upset the pony, nevertheless, and he blundered into another, who blundered into the left-hand post, and then there was confusion and dust and wood.

Bamboo was lying on the ground, seeing stars; an Archangel pony rolled beside him, breathless and angry; Shikast had sat down dog-fashion to avoid falling over the others, and was sliding along on his little bobtail in a cloud of dust; and Powell was sitting on the ground, hammering with his stick and trying to cheer.

All the others were shouting at the top of what was left of their voices, and the men who had been spilt were shouting too.

As soon as the people saw no one was hurt, ten thousand native and English shouted and clapped and yelled, and before anyone could stop them, the pipers of the Skidars broke on to the ground, with all the native officers and men behind them, and marched up and down, playing a wild Northern tune called "*Zakhme Bagán*," and through the insolent blaring of the pipes and the high-pitched native yells you could hear the Archangels' band hammering, "*For they are all jolly good fellows*," and then reproachfully to the losing team, "*Ooh, Kafoozalum! Kafoozalum! Kafoozalum!*"

Besides all these things and many more, there was a Commander-in-Chief, and an Inspector-General of Cavalry, and the principal veterinary officer of all India standing on the top of a regimental coach, yelling like schoolboys; and brigadiers and colonels and commissioners, and hundreds of pretty ladies joined the chorus.

But The Maltese Cat stood with his head down, wondering how many legs were left to him; and Lutyens watched the men and ponies pick themselves out of the wreck of the two goal-posts, and he patted The Maltese Cat very tenderly.

"I say," said the Captain of the Archangels, spitting a pebble out of his mouth, "will you take three thousand for that pony—as he stands?"

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"No, thank you. I've an idea he's saved my life," said Lutyens, getting off and lying down at full length.

Both teams were on the ground, too, waving their boots in the air, and coughing and drawing deep breaths, as the *saises* ran up to take away the ponies, and an officious water-carrier sprinkled the players with dirty water till they sat up.

"My aunt!" said Powell, rubbing his back, and looking at the stumps of the goal-posts. "That was a game!"

They played it over again, every stroke of it, that night at the big dinner, when the Free-for-All Cup was filled and passed down the table, and emptied and filled again, and everybody made most eloquent speeches. About two in the morning, when there might have been some singing, a wise little, plain little, grey little head looked in through the open door.

"Hurrah! Bring him in," said the Archangels; and his *sais*, who was very happy indeed, patted The Maltese Cat on the flank, and he limped in to the blaze of light and the glittering uniforms, looking for Lutyens.

He was used to messes, and men's bedrooms, and places where ponies are not usually encouraged, and in his youth had jumped on and off a mess-table for a bet. So he behaved himself politely, and ate bread dipped in salt, and was petted all round the table, moving gingerly; and they drank his health, because he had done more to win the Cup than any man or horse on the ground.

That was glory and honour enough for the rest of his days, and The Maltese Cat did not complain much when the veterinary surgeon said that he would be no good for polo any more. When Lutyens married, his wife did not allow him to play, so he was forced to be an umpire; and his pony on these occasions was a flea-bitten grey with a neat polo-tail, lame all round, but desperately quick on his feet, and, as everybody knew, Past Pluperfect Prestissimo Player of the Game.

* * *

PROGRESS

Dr. Albert Einstein was asked to describe the weapons that most likely would be used in a third World War. Einstein replied he wouldn't care to forecast, but that he could describe the weapons for World War IV.

"What will they be?" Einstein was asked.

"Rocks!" replied the famed physicist.

Chicago Sun-Times

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★*The young Horatio Hornblower, promoted Acting Lieutenant but with his rank still unconfirmed, finds greatness—and new perils—thrust suddenly upon him. Sent to seek provisions for His Majesty's fleet, we find him quarantined in enemy waters for three long weeks—after an encounter with the dreaded Black Death—and engaged in the novel and hazardous task of managing livestock at sea.*

HORNBLOWER AND NOAH'S ARK

by C. S. FORESTER

ACTING LIEUTENANT HORNBLOWER sat in the stern sheets of the longboat beside Mr. Tapling of the diplomatic service, with his feet among bags of gold. About him rose the steep shores of the Gulf of Oran, and ahead of him lay the city, white in the sunshine, like a mass of marble blocks dumped by a careless hand upon the hillsides where they rose from the water. The oar blades, as the boat's crew pulled away rhythmically over the gentle swell, were biting into the clearest emerald green, and it was only a moment since they had left behind the bluest the Mediterranean could show.

"A pretty sight from here," said Tapling, gazing at the town they were approaching, "but closer inspection will show that the eye is deceived. And as for the nose! The stinks of the true believers have to be smelt to be believed. Lay her alongside the jetty there, Mr. Hornblower, beyond those xebecs."

"Aye aye, sir," said the coxswain, when Hornblower gave the order.

"There's a sentry on the waterfront battery here," commented Tapling, looking about him keenly. "Not more than half asleep, either. And notice the two guns in the two castles. Thirty two pounders, without a doubt. Stone shot piled in readiness. A stone shot flying into fragments on impact effects damage out of proportion to its size. And the walls seem sound enough. To seize Oran by a *coup de main* would not be easy, I am afraid. If His Nibs the Bey should choose to cut our throats and keep our gold it would be long before we were avenged, Mr. Hornblower."

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"I don't think I should find any satisfaction in being avenged in any case, sir," said Hornblower.

"There's some truth in that. But doubtless His Nibs will spare us this time. The goose lays golden eggs—a boatload of gold every month must make a dazzling prospect for a pirate Bey in these days of convoys."

"Way 'nough," called the coxswain. "Oars!"

The longboat came gliding alongside the jetty and hooked on neatly. A few seated figures in the shade turned eyes at least, and in some cases even their heads as well, to look at the British boat's crew. A number of swarthy Moors appeared on the decks of the xebecs and gazed down at them, and one or two shouted remarks to them.

"No doubt they are describing the ancestry of the infidels," said Tapling. "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names can never hurt me, especially when I do not understand them. Where's our man?"

He shaded his eyes to look along the waterfront.

"No one in sight, sir, that looks like a Christian," said Hornblower.

"Our man's no Christian," said Tapling. "White, but no Christian. White by courtesy at that—French-Arab-Levantine mixture. His Britannic Majesty's Consul at Oran *pro tem.*, and a Musselman from expediency. Though there are very serious disadvantages about being a true believer. Who would want four wives at any time, especially when one pays for the doubtful privilege by abstaining from wine?"

Tapling stepped up on to the jetty and Hornblower followed him. The gentle swell that rolled up the Gulf broke soothingly below them, and the blinding heat of the noonday sun was reflected up into their faces from the stone blocks on which they stood. For down the Gulf lay the two anchored ships—the storeship and H.M.S. *Indefatigable*—lovely on the bluest silver surface.

"And yet I would rather see Drury Lane on a Saturday night," said Tapling.

He turned back to look at the city walls, which guarded the place from seaborne attack. A narrow gate, flanked by bastions, opened on to the waterfront. Sentries in red caftans were visible on the summit. In the deep shadow of the gate something was moving, but it was hard with eyes dazzled by the sun to see what it was. Then it emerged from the shadow as a little group coming towards them—a half-naked negro leading a donkey, and on the back of the donkey, seated sideways far back towards the root of the tail, a vast figure in a blue robe.

"Shall we meet his Britannic Majesty's Consul halfway?" asked Tapling. "No. Let him come to us."

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The negro halted the donkey, and the man on the donkey's back slid to the ground and came towards them—a mountainous man, waddling straddle-legged in his robe, his huge clay-coloured face topped by a white turban. A scanty black moustache and beard sprouted from his lips and chin.

"Your servant, Mr. Duras," said Tapling. "And may I present Acting Lieutenant Horatio Hornblower, of the frigate *Indefatigable?*"

Mr. Duras nodded his perspiring head.

"Have you brought the money?" he asked, in guttural French; it took Hornblower a moment or two to adjust his mind to the language and his ear to Duras' intonation.

"Seven thousand golden guineas," replied Tapling, in reasonably good French.

"Good," said Duras, with a trace of relief. "Is it in the boat?"

"It is in the boat, and it stays in the boat at present," answered Tapling. "Do you remember the conditions agreed upon? Four hundred fat cattle, fifteen hundred *fanegas* of barley grain. When I see those in the lighters, and the lighters alongside the ships down the bay, then I hand over the money. Have you the stores ready?"

"Soon."

"As I expected. How long?"

"Soon—very soon."

Tapling made a grimace of resignation.

"Then we shall return to the ships. Tomorrow, perhaps, or the day after, we shall come back with the gold."

Alarm appeared on Duras' sweating face.

"No, do not do that," he said, hastily. "You do not know His Highness the Bey. He is changeable. If he knows the gold is here he will give orders for the cattle to be brought. Take the gold away, and he will not stir. And—and—he will be angry with me."

"*Ira principis mors est*," said Tapling, and in response to Duras' blank look obliged by a translation. "The wrath of the prince means death. Is not that so?"

"Yes," said Duras, and he in turn said something in an unknown language, stabbed at the air with his fingers in a peculiar gesture, and then translated, "May it not happen."

"Certainly we hope it may not happen," agreed Tapling with disarming cordiality. "The bowstring, the hook, even the bastinado are all unpleasant. It might be better if you went to the Bey and prevailed upon him to give the necessary orders for the grain and the cattle. Or we shall leave at nightfall."

Tapling glanced up at the sun to lay stress on the time limit.

"I shall go," said Duras, spreading his hands in a deprecatory gesture, "I shall go. But I beg of you, do not depart. Perhaps

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His Highness is busy in his harem. Then no one may disturb him. But I shall try. The grain is here ready—it lies in the Kasbah there. It is only the cattle that have to be brought in. Please be patient. I implore you. His Highness is not accustomed to commerce, as you know, sir. Still less is he accustomed to commerce after the fashion of the Franks."

Duras wiped his streaming face with a corner of his robe.

"Pardon me," he said, "I do not feel well. But I shall go to His Highness. I shall go. Please wait for me."

"Until sunset," said Tapling implacably.

Duras called to his negro attendant, who had been crouching huddled up under the donkey's belly to take advantage of the shade it cast. With an effort Duras hoisted his ponderous weight on to the donkey's hind quarters. He wiped his face again and looked at them with a trace of bewilderment.

"Wait for me," were the last words he said as the donkey was led away back into the city gate.

"He is afraid of the Bey," said Tapling watching him go. "I would rather face twenty Beys than Admiral Sir John Jervis in a tantrum. What will he do when he hears about this further delay, with the Fleet on short rations already? He'll have my guts for a necktie."

"One cannot expect punctuality of these people," said Hornblower with the easy philosophy of the man who does not bear the responsibility. But he thought of the British Navy, without friends, without allies, maintaining desperately the blockade of a hostile Europe, in face of superior numbers, storms, disease, and now famine.

"Look at that!" said Tapling pointing suddenly.

It was a big grey rat which had made its appearance in the dry storm gutter that crossed the waterfront. Regardless of the bright sunshine it sat up and looked round at the world; even when Tapling stamped his foot it showed no great signs of alarm. When he stamped a second time it slowly turned to hide itself again in the drain, missed its footing so that it lay writhing for a moment at the mouth of the drain, and then regained its feet and disappeared into the darkness.

"An old rat, I suppose," said Tapling meditatively. "Senile, possibly. Even blind, maybe."

Hornblower cared nothing about rats, senile or otherwise. He took a step or two back in the direction of the longboat and the civilian officer conformed to his movements.

"Rig that mains'l so that it gives us some shade, Maxwell," said Hornblower. "We're here for the rest of the day."

"A great comfort," said Tapling, seating himself on a stone

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bollard beside the boat, " to be here in a heathen port. No need to worry in case any men run off. No need to worry about liquor. Only about bullocks and barley. And how to get a spark on this tinder."

He blew through the pipe that he took from his pocket, preparatory to filling it. The boat was shaded by the mainsail now, and the hands sat in the bows yarning in low tones, while the others made themselves as comfortable as possible in the stern sheets; the boat rolled peacefully in the tiny swell, the rhythmic sound as the fendoffs creaked between her gunwale and the jetty having a soothing effect while city and port dozed in the blazing afternoon heat.

It was not easy for a young man of Hornblower's active temperament to endure prolonged inaction. He climbed up on the jetty to stretch his legs, and paced up and down; a Moor in a white gown and turban came staggering in the sunshine along the waterfront. His gait was unsteady, and he walked with his legs well apart to provide a firmer base for his swaying body.

" What was it you said, sir, about liquor being abhorred by the Moslems ? " said Hornblower to Tapling down in the stern sheets.

" Not necessarily abhorred," replied Tapling, guardedly. " But anathematized, illegal, unlawful, and hard to obtain."

" Someone here has contrived to obtain some, sir," said Hornblower.

" Let me see," said Tapling, scrambling up; the hands, bored with waiting and interested as ever in liquor, landed from the bows to stare as well.

" That looks like a man who has drink taken," agreed Tapling.

" Three sheets in the wind, sir," said Maxwell, as the Moor staggered.

" And taken all aback," supplemented Tapling, as the Moor swerved wildly to one side in a semicircle.

At the end of the semicircle he fell with a crash on his face; his brown legs emerged from the robe a couple of times and were drawn in again, and he lay passive, his head on his arms, his turban fallen on the ground to reveal his shaven skull with a tassel of hair on the crown.

" Totally dismasted," said Hornblower.

" And hard aground," said Tapling.

But the Moor now lay oblivious of everything.

" And here's Duras," said Hornblower.

Out through the gate came the massive figure on the little donkey; another donkey bearing another portly figure followed, each donkey being led by a negro slave, and after them came a dozen swarthy individuals whose muskets, and whose pretence at uniform, indicated that they were soldiers.

" The treasurer of His Highness," said Duras, by way of intro-

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duction when he and the other had dismounted. "Come to fetch the gold."

The portly Moor looked loftily upon them; Duras was still streaming with sweat in the hot sun.

"The gold is there," said Tapling, pointing. "In the stern sheets of the longboat. You will have a closer view of it when we have a closer view of the stores we are to buy."

Duras translated this speech into Arabic. There was a rapid interchange of sentences, before the Treasurer apparently yielded. He turned and waved his arms back to the gate in what was evidently a prearranged signal. A dreary procession immediately emerged—a long line of men, all of them almost naked, white, black, and mulatto, each man staggering along under the burden of a sack of grain. Overseers with sticks walked with them.

"The money," said Duras, as a result of something said by the Treasurer.

A word from Tapling set the hands to work lifting the heavy bags of gold on to the quay.

"With the corn on the jetty I will put the gold there, too," said Tapling to Hornblower. "Keep your eye on it while I look at some of those sacks."

Tapling walked over to the slave gang. Here and there he opened a sack, looked into it, and inspected handfuls of the golden barley grain; other sacks he felt from the outside.

"No hope of looking over every sack in a hundred tons of barley," he remarked, strolling back again to Hornblower. "Much of it is sand, I expect. But that is the way of the heathen. The price is adjusted accordingly. Very well, Effendi."

At a sign from Duras, and under the urgings of the overseers, the slaves burst into activity, trotting up to the quayside and dropping their sacks into the lighter which lay there. The first dozen men were organized into a working party to distribute the cargo evenly into the bottom of the lighter, while the others trotted off, their bodies gleaming with sweat, to fetch fresh loads. At the same time a couple of swarthy herdsmen came out through the gate driving a small herd of cattle.

"Scrubby little creatures," said Tapling, looking them over critically, "but that was allowed for in the price, too."

"The gold," said Duras.

In reply Tapling opened one of the bags at his feet, filled his hand with golden guineas, and let them cascade through his fingers into the bag again.

"Five hundred guineas there," he said. "Fourteen bags, as you see. They will be yours when the lighters are loaded and unmoored."

Duras wiped his face with a weary gesture. His knees seemed to

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be weak, and he leaned upon the patient donkey that stood behind him.

The cattle were being driven down a gangway into another lighter, and a second herd had now appeared and was waiting.

"Things move faster than you feared," said Hornblower.

"See how they drive the poor wretches," replied Tapling sententiously. "See! Things move fast when you have no concern for human flesh and blood."

A coloured slave had fallen to the ground under his burden. He lay there disregarding the blows rained on him by the sticks of the overseers. There was a small movement of his legs. Someone dragged him out of the way at last and the sacks continued to be carried to the lighter. The other lighter was filling fast with cattle, packed into a tight, bellowing mass in which no movement was possible.

"His Nibs is actually keeping his word," marvelled Tapling. "I'd have settled for the half, if I had been asked beforehand."

One of the herdsmen on the quay had sat down with his face in his hands; now he fell over limply on his side.

"Sir—" began Hornblower to Tapling, and the two men looked at each other with the same awful thought occurring to them at the same moment.

Duras began to say something. With one hand on the withers of the donkey and the other gesticulating in the air it seemed that he was making something of a speech, but there was no sense in the words he was roaring out in a hoarse voice. His face was swollen beyond its customary fatness and his expression was wildly distorted, while his cheeks were so suffused with blood as to look dark under his tan. Duras quitted his hold of the donkey and began to reel about in half circles, under the eyes of Moors and Britishers. His voice died away to a whisper, his legs gave way under him, and he fell to his hands and knees and then to his face.

"That's the plague!" said Tapling. "The Black Death! I saw it in Smyrna in '96."

He and the other sailors had shrunk back on the one side, the soldiers and the Treasurer on the other, leaving the palpitating body lying in the clear space between them.

"The plague, by St. Peter!" squealed one of the young sailors. He would have headed a rush to the longboat.

"Stand still, there!" roared Hornblower, scared of the plague but with the habits of discipline so deeply engrained in him by now that he checked the panic automatically.

"I was a fool not to have thought of it before," said Tapling. "That dying rat—that fellow over there who we thought was drunk. I should have known!"

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The soldier who appeared to be the sergeant in command of the Treasurer's escort was in explosive conversation with the chief of the overseers of the slaves, both of them staring and pointing at the dying Duras; the Treasurer himself was clutching his robe about him and looking down at the wretched man in fascinated horror.

"Well, sir," said Hornblower to Tapling, "what do we do?"

Hornblower was of the temperament that demands immediate action in face of a crisis.

"Do?" replied Tapling with a bitter smile. "We stay here and rot."

"Stay *here*?"

"The fleet will never have us back. Not until we have served three weeks of quarantine. Three weeks after the last case has occurred. Here in Oran."

"Nonsense!" said Hornblower, with all the respect due to his senior startled out of him. "No one would order that."

"Would they not? Have you ever seen an epidemic in a fleet?"

Hornblower had not, but he had heard enough about them—fleets where nine out of ten had died of putrid fevers. Crowded ships with twenty two inches of hammock space per man were ideal breeding places for epidemics. He realized that no captain, no admiral, would run that risk for the sake of a longboat's crew of twenty men.

The two xebecs against the jetty had suddenly cast off, and were working their way out of the harbour under sweeps.

"The plague can only have struck today," mused Hornblower, the habit of deduction strong in him despite his sick fear.

The cattle herders were abandoning their work, giving a wide berth to that one of their number who was lying on the quay. Up at the town gate it appeared that the guard was employed in driving people back into the town—apparently the rumour of plague had spread sufficiently therein to cause a panic, while the guard had just received orders not to allow the population to stream out into the surrounding country.

There would be frightful things happening in the town soon. The Treasurer was climbing on his donkey; the crowd of grain-carrying slaves was melting away as the overseers fled.

"I must report this to the ship," said Hornblower; Tapling, as a civilian diplomatic officer, held no authority over him. The whole responsibility was Hornblower's. The longboat and the longboat's crew were Hornblower's command, entrusted to him by Captain Pellew whose authority derived from the King.

Amazing, how the panic was spreading. The Treasurer was

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gone; Duras' negro slave had ridden off on his late master's donkey; the soldiers had hastened off in a single group. The waterfront was deserted now except for the dead and dying; along the waterfront, presumably, at the foot of the wall, lay the way to the open country which all desired to seek. The British sailors were standing alone, with the bags of gold at their feet.

"Plague spreads through the air," said Tapling, "even the rats die of it. We have been here for hours. We were near enough to—that—" he nodded at the dying Duras—"to speak to him, to catch his breath. Which of us will be the first?"

"We'll see when the time comes," said Hornblower. It was his contrary nature to be sanguine in the face of depression; besides, he did not want the men to hear what Tapling was saying.

"And there's the fleet!" said Tapling bitterly. "This lot—" he nodded at the deserted lighters, one almost full of cattle, the other almost full of grain sacks, "This lot would be a godsend. The men are on two-thirds rations."

"Damn it, we can do something about it," said Hornblower. "Maxwell, put the gold back in the boat, and get that awning in."

The officer of the watch in H.M.S. *Indefatigable* saw the ship's longboat returning from the town. A slight breeze had swung the frigate and the *Caroline*, the transport brig, to their anchors, and the longboat, instead of running alongside, came up under the *Indefatigable*'s stern to leeward.

"Mr. Christie!" hailed Hornblower, standing up in the bows of the longboat.

The officer on the watch came aft to the taffrail.

"What is it?" he demanded, puzzled.

"I must speak to the Captain."

"Then come on board and speak to him. What the devil—?"

"Please ask the Captain if I may speak to him."

Pellew appeared at the after cabin window; he could hardly have helped hearing the bellowed conversation.

"Yes, Mr. Hornblower?"

Hornblower told him the news.

"Keep to loo'ard, Mr. Hornblower."

"Yes, sir. But the stores—"

"What about them?"

Hornblower outlined the situation and made his request.

"It's not very regular," mused Pellew. "Besides—"

He did not want to shout aloud his thoughts that perhaps everyone in the longboat would soon be dead of plague.

"We'll be all right, sir. It's a week's rations for the squadron."

That was the point, the vital matter. Pellew had to balance the

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possible loss of a transport brig against the possible gain of supplies, immeasurably more important, which would enable the squadron to maintain its watch over the outlet to the Mediterranean. Looked at in that light Hornblower's suggestion had added force.

"Oh, very well, Mr. Hornblower. By the time you bring the stores out I'll have the crew transferred. I appoint you to the command of the *Caroline*."

"Thank you, sir."

"Mr. Tapling will continue as passenger with you."

"Very good, sir."

So when the crew of the longboat, toiling and sweating, brought the two lighters down the bay, they found the *Caroline* swinging deserted at her anchors, while a dozen curious telescopes from the *Indefatigable* watched the proceedings. Hornblower went up the brig's side with half a dozen hands.

"She's like a blooming Noah's Ark, sir," said Maxwell.

The comparison was apt; the *Caroline* was flush-decked, and the whole available deck area was divided by partitions into stalls for the cattle, while, to enable the ship to be worked, light gangways had been laid over the stalls into a practically continuous upper deck.

"An' all the animiles, sir," said another seaman.

"But Noah's animals walked in two by two," said Hornblower. "We're not so lucky. And we've got to get the grain on board first. Get those hatches unbattened."

In ordinary conditions a working party of two or three hundred men from the *Indefatigable* would have made short work of getting in the cargo from the lighters, but now it had to be done by the longboat's complement of eighteen. Luckily Pellew had had the forethought and kindness to have the ballast struck out of the holds, or they would have had to do that weary job first.

"Tail on to those tackles, men," said Hornblower.

Pellew saw the first bundle of grain sacks rise slowly into the air from the lighter, and swung over and down the *Caroline*'s hatchway.

"He'll be all right," he decided. "Man the capstan and get under way, if you please, Mr. Bolton."

Hornblower, directing the work on the tackles, heard Pellew's voice come to him through the speaking trumpet.

"Good luck, Mr. Hornblower. Report in three weeks at Gibraltar."

"Very good, sir. Thank you, sir."

Hornblower turned back to find a seaman at his elbow knuckling his forehead.

"Beg pardon, sir. But can you hear those cattle bellerin', sir? 'Tis mortal hot, an' 'tis water they want, sir."

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"Hell," said Hornblower.

He would never get the cattle on board before nightfall. He left a small party at work transferring cargo, and with the rest of the men he began to extemporize a method of watering the unfortunate cattle in the lighter. Half of the *Caroline*'s hold space was filled with water barrels and fodder, but it was an awkward business getting water down to the lighter with pump and hose, and the poor brutes down there surged about uncontrollably at the prospect of water. Hornblower saw the lighter heel and almost capsize; one of his men —luckily one who could swim—went hastily overboard from the lighter to avoid being crushed to death.

"Hell," said Hornblower, again, and that was by no means the last time.

Without any skilled advice he was having to learn the business of managing livestock at sea; each moment brought its lessons. A naval officer on active service indeed found himself engaged on strange duties. It was well after dark before Hornblower called a halt to the labours of his men, and it was before dawn that he roused them up to work again. It was still early in the morning that the last of the grain sacks was stowed away and Hornblower had to face the operation of swaying up the cattle from the lighter.

After their night down there, with little water and less food, the animals were in no mood to be trifled with, but it was easier at first while they were crowded together. A bellyband was slipped round the nearest, the tackle hooked on, and the animal was swayed up, lowered to the deck through an opening in the gangways, and herded into one of the stalls with ease. The seamen shouting and waving their shirts, thought it was great fun, but they were not sure when the next one, released from its bellyband, went on the rampage and chased them about the deck, threatening death with its horns, until it wandered into its stall where the bar could be promptly dropped to shut it in. Hornblower, looking at the sun rising rapidly in the east, did not think it fun at all.

And the emptier the lighter became, the more room the cattle had to rush about in it; to capture each one to put a bellyband on it was a desperate adventure. Nor were those half-wild bullocks soothed by the sight of their companions being successively hauled bellowing into the air over their heads.

Before the day was half done Hornblower's men were as weary as if they had fought a battle, and there was not one of them who would not gladly have quitted this novel employment in exchange for some normal seaman's duty like going aloft to reef topsails on a stormy night. As soon as Hornblower had the notion of dividing the interior of the lighter up into sections with barricades of stout spars the work became easier, but it took time, and before it was done the

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cattle had already suffered a couple of casualties—weaker members of the herd crushed underfoot in the course of the wild rushes about the lighter.

And there was a distraction when a boat came out from the shore, with swarthy Moors at the oars and the Treasurer in the stern. Hornblower left Tapling to negotiate—apparently the Bey, at least, had not been so frightened of the plague as to forget to ask for his money. All Hornblower insisted upon was that the boat should keep well to leeward, and the money was floated off to it headed up in an empty rum-puncheon.

Night found not more than half the cattle in the stalls on board, with Hornblower worrying about feeding and watering them, and snatching at hints diplomatically won from those members of his crew who had had bucolic experience. But the earliest dawn saw him driving his men to work again, and deriving a momentary satisfaction from the sight of Tapling having to leap for his life to the gangway, out of reach of a maddened bullock, which was charging about the deck and refusing to enter a stall. And by the time the last animal was safely packed in Hornblower was faced with another problem—that of dealing with what one of the men elegantly termed " mucking out." Fodder—water—mucking out; that deck-load of cattle seemed to promise enough work in itself to keep his eighteen men busy, without any thought of the needs of handling the ship.

But there were advantages about the men being kept busy, as Hornblower grimly decided; there had not been a single mention of plague since the work began. The anchorage where the *Caroline* lay was exposed to north-easterly winds, and it was necessary that he should take her out to sea before such a wind should blow. He mustered his men to divide them into watches; he was the only navigator, so that he had to appoint the coxswain and the under-coxswain, Jordan, as officers of the watch.

Someone volunteered as cook, and Hornblower, running his eye over his assembled company, appointed Tapling as cook's mate. Tapling opened his mouth to protest, but there was that in Hornblower's expression which cut the protest short. There was no bos'n, no carpenter—no surgeon either, as Hornblower pointed out to himself gloomily. But on the other hand if the need for a doctor should arise it would, he hoped, be mercifully brief.

" Port watch, loose the jibs and main tops'l," ordered Hornblower. " Starboard watch, man the capstan."

So began that voyage of H.M. transport brig *Caroline* which became legendary, thanks to the highly coloured accounts retailed by the crew during innumerable dogwatches in later commissions,

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throughout the King's navy. The *Caroline* spent her three weeks of quarantine in homeless wanderings about the western Mediterranean. It was necessary that she should keep close up to the Straits, for fear lest the westerlies and the prevailing inward set of the current should take her out of reach of Gibraltar when the time came, so she beat about between the coasts of Spain and Africa trailing behind her a growing farmyard stench.

The *Caroline* was a worn out ship, and with any sort of sea running she leaked like a sieve. There were always hands at work on the pumps, either pumping her out or pumping sea water on to her deck to clean it or pumping up fresh water for the cattle. Her top hamper made her almost unmanageable in a fresh breeze; her deck seams leaked, of course, when she worked, allowing a constant drip of unspeakable filth down below.

The one consolation was in the supply of fresh meat—a commodity some of Hornblower's men had not tasted for three months. Hornblower recklessly sacrificed a bullock a day, for in that Mediterranean climate meat could not be kept sweet. So his men feasted on steaks and fresh tongues; there were plenty of men on board who had never in their whole lives before eaten a beefsteak.

But fresh water was the trouble—it was a greater anxiety to Hornblower than even it was to the average ship's captain, for the cattle were always thirsty; twice Hornblower had to land a raiding party at dawn on the coast of Spain, seize a fishing village, and fill his watercasks in the local stream.

It was a dangerous adventure, and the second landing revealed the danger, for while the *Caroline* was trying to claw off the land again a Spanish guarda-costa lugger came gliding round the point with all sails set. Maxwell saw her first, but Hornblower saw her before he could report her presence.

"Very well, Maxwell," said Hornblower, trying to sound composed.

He turned his glass upon her. She was no more than three miles off, a trifle to windward, and the *Caroline* was embayed, cut off by the land from all chance of escape. The lugger could go three feet to her two, while the *Caroline*'s clumsy superstructure prevented her from lying nearer than eight points to the wind.

As Hornblower gazed, the accumulated irritation of the past seventeen days boiled over. He was furious with fate for having thrust this ridiculous mission on him. He hated the *Caroline* and her clumsiness and her stinks and her cargo. He raged against the destiny which had caught him in this hopeless position.

"Hell!" said Hornblower, actually stamping his feet on the upper gangway in his anger. "Hell *and* damnation!"

He was dancing with rage, he observed with some curiosity.

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But with his fighting madness at the boil there was no chance of his yielding without a struggle, and his mental convulsions resulted in his producing a scheme for action. How many men of a crew did a Spanish guarda-costa carry? Twenty? That would be an outside figure—those luggers were only intended to act against petty smugglers. And with surprise on his side there was still a chance, despite the four eight-pounders that the lugger carried.

"Pistols and cutlasses, men," he said. "Jordan, choose two men and show yourselves up here. But the rest of you keep under cover. Hide yourselves. Yes, Mr. Tapling, you may serve with us. See that you are armed."

No one would expect resistance from a laden cattle transport; the Spaniards would expect to find on board a crew of a dozen at most, and not a disciplined force of twenty. The problem lay in luring the lugger within reach.

"Full and by," called Hornblower down to the helmsman below. "Be ready to jump, men. Maxwell, if a man shows himself before my order shoot him with your own hand. You hear me? That's an order, and you disobey me at your peril."

"Aye aye, sir," said Maxwell.

The lugger was romping up towards them; even in that light air there was a white wave under her sharp bows. Hornblower glanced up to make sure that the *Caroline* was displaying no colours. That made his plan legal under the laws of war. The report of a gun and a puff of smoke came from the lugger as she fired across the *Caroline*'s bows.

"I'm going to heave to, Jordan," said Hornblower. "Main tops'l braces. Helm alee."

The *Caroline* came to the wind and lay there wallowing, a surrendered and helpless ship apparently, if ever there was one.

"Not a sound, men," said Hornblower.

The cattle bellowed mournfully. Here came the lugger, her crew plainly visible now. Hornblower could see an officer clinging to the main shrouds ready to board, but no one else seemed to have a care in the world. Everyone seemed to be looking up at the clumsy superstructure and laughing at the farmyard noises issuing from it.

"Wait, men, wait," said Hornblower.

The lugger was coming alongside when Hornblower suddenly realized, with a hot flood of blood under his skin, that he himself was unarmed. He had told his men to take pistols and cutlasses; he had advised Tapling to arm himself, and yet he had clean forgotten about his own need for weapons. But it was too late now to try to remedy that. Someone in the lugger hailed in Spanish, and Hornblower spread his hands in a show of incomprehension. Now they were alongside.

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"Come on, men!" shouted Hornblower.

He ran across the superstructure and with a gulp he flung himself across the gap at the officer in the shrouds. He gulped again as he went through the air; he fell with all his weight on the unfortunate man, clasped him round the shoulders, and fell with him to the deck. There were shouts and yells behind him as the *Caroline* spewed up her crew into the lugger. A rush of feet, a clatter and a clash. Hornblower got to his feet empty handed. Maxwell was just striking down a man with his cutlass. Tapling was heading a rush forward into the bows, waving a cutlass and yelling like a madman. Then it was all over; the astonished Spaniards were unable to lift a hand in their own defence.

So it came about that on the twenty-second day of her quarantine the *Caroline* came into Gibraltar Bay with a captured guarda-costa lugger under her lee. A thick barnyard stench trailed with her, too, but at least, when Hornblower went on board the *Indefatigable* to make his report, he had a suitable reply ready for Mr. Midshipman Bracegirdle.

"Hullo, Noah, how are Shem and Ham?" asked Mr. Bracegirdle.

"Shem and Ham have taken a prize," said Hornblower. "I regret that Mr. Bracegirdle can't say the same."

But the Chief Commissary of the squadron, when Hornblower reported to him, had a comment to which even Hornblower was unable to make a reply.

"Do you mean to tell me, Mr. Hornblower," said the Chief Commissary, "that you allowed your men to eat fresh beef? A bullock a day for your eighteen men? There must have been plenty of ship's provisions on board. That was wanton extravagance, Mr. Hornblower, I'm surprised at you."

★*The adventures of the young Horatio Hornblower, ex-midshipman, now Acting Lieutenant, have become as familiar to our readers as his great counterpart, the hero of Waterloo. "I really did my best," says his creator, C. S. Forester, "to put Hornblower out of my life. But somehow he reasserts himself, and ideas about his early career keep creeping into my mind."*

And so ARGOSY is happy to announce—
HORNBLOWER, THE DUCHESS AND THE DEVIL
in next month's Argosy
on sale April 6th.

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OD'S BODIKINS !

It is not children only that one feeds with fairy tales

G. E. LESSING

From noise of Scare-fires rest ye free,
From Murders—Benedicite.
From all mischances, that may fright
Your pleasing slumbers in the night :
Mercie secure ye all, and keep
The Goblin from ye, while ye sleep . . .

ROBERT HERRICK, 1591-1674

Wha Wad Keep Awa the Worrie-Cows ?

She was full six feet high . . . Her dark elf-locks shot out like the snakes of the Gorgon, between an old-fashioned bonnet called a bongrace, heightening the singular effect of her strong and weather-beaten features, which they partly shadowed, while her eyes had a wild roll . . .

" Aweel, Ellangowan," she said, " wad it no hae been a bonnie thing an the leddy had been brought to bed and me at the fair o'Drumshourloch . . ? Wha was to hae keepit awa the worrie-cows, I trow ?—ay, and the elves and gyre-carlings frae the bonny bairn, grace be wi' it ? Ay, or said Saint Colme's charm for its sake, the dear ? "

And without waiting an answer, she began to sing—

Trefoil, vervain, John's-wort, dill,
Hinders witches of their will ;
Weel is them, that weel may
Fast upon Saint Andrew's day.

Saint Bride and her brat,
Saint Colme and his cat,
Saint Michael and his spear,
Keep the house frae reif and wear.

This charm she sang to a wild tune, in a high and shrill voice, and cutting three capers with such strength and agility as almost to touch the roof of the room, concluded,

" And now, Laird, will ye no order me a tass o' brandy ? "

SIR WALTER SCOTT, 1771-1832,
Guy Mannering

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Lo! and Behold!

Mrs. Atlay, wife of a late Bishop of Hereford, dreamed one night that there was a pig in the dining room of the palace. She came downstairs, and in the hall told her governess and children of the dream before family prayers. When these were over, nobody who was told the story having left the hall in the interval, she went into the dining room and there was the pig . . .

ANDREW LANG, 1844-1912,
A Book of Dreams and Ghosts

Is Any Man So Daring?

Up the airy mountain,
Down the rushy glen,
We daren't go a-hunting
For fear of little men;
Wee folk, good folk,
Trooping all together;
Green jacket, red cap,
And white owl's feather!

By the craggy hill-side,
Through the mosses bare,
They have planted thorn-trees
For pleasure here and there.
Is any man so daring
As to dig one up in spite,
He shall find the thornies set
In his bed at night.

Up the airy mountain,
Down the rushy glen,
We daren't go a-hunting
For fear of little men . . .

WILLIAM ALLINGHAM, 1824-1889

Mentor

Mr. Brograve, of Hamel, near Puckridge in Hertfordshire, when he was a young man, riding in a lane in that county, had a blow given him on his cheek, (or head): he looked back and saw that nobody was near behind him; anon he had such another blow, I have forgot if a third. He turned back, and fell to the study of the law . . .

JOHN AUBREY, 1626-1697, *Miscellanies*

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The Three Sisters

The instant they passed the holly a strange weakness came over the heroes. Their fists seemed to grow heavy as lead, and went dingle-dangle at the ends of their arms; their legs became as light as straws and began to bend in and out; their necks became too delicate to hold anything up, so that their heads wibbled and wobbled from side to side.

"What's wrong at all?" said Conán, as he tumbled to the ground.

"Everything is," Fionn replied, and he tumbled beside him.

The three sisters then tied the heroes with every kind of loop and twist and knot that could be thought of . . .

By that time some of the Fianna had returned to the mound. They saw the cave and went into it, but no sooner had they passed the holly branches than their strength went from them, and they were seized and bound by the vicious hags . . .

As the men were captured they were carried by the hags into dark mysterious holes and black perplexing labyrinths.

"Here is another one," cried Caevóg as she bundled a trussed champion along.

"This one is fat," said Cuillen, and she rolled a bulky Fenian along like a wheel.

"Here," said Iaran, "is a love of a man. One could eat this kind of man," she murmured, and she licked a lip that had whiskers growing inside as well as out.

And the corded champion whimpered in her arms, for he did not know but eating might indeed be his fate, and he would have preferred to be coffined anywhere in the world rather than to be coffined inside of that face . . .

JAMES STEPHENS, *Irish Fairy Tales*

$X + Y = O$

Somewhere—in desolate wind-swept space—
In Twilight-land—in No-man's land—
Two hurrying Shapes met face to face,
And bade each other stand.

"And who are you?" cried one a-gape
Shuddering in the gloaming light.
"I know not," said the second Shape,
"I only died last night!"

THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH, 1836-1907

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THE DUCHESS AND THE DOLLS

It was fantastic, incredible, this game their mistress played

by C. MOYNIHAN

THIS is the story of the beautiful Imogen, Duchess of Danescliffe and fourth daughter to the Marquis of Rlycoed, a strange and ancient legend handed down through countless generations. Those who have lived long and know that even now strange things can happen, will surely believe it.

It is recorded that the Llewelyns were a foolhardy lot. The black Llewelyns they were called, and they were known to be cruel, handsome and arrogant. Wherever they travelled they left a trail of broken hearts behind them, and it was said that to love a Llewelyn was to taste despair.

In the end tragedy and suffering overtook the Llewelyns in turn. Caradoc Llewelyn married his third wife only to be deserted on the night of the wedding feast. Evelina killed herself when the man she loved married another. Edwin, who inherited his father's title, was maimed by an enraged rival, and Gwendoline and Isobel became so notorious that they were shunned by all who knew them.

Imogen was the youngest and the loveliest, and so heavily did the tragedies of her family lie upon her that she had none of the gaiety of girlhood. She was hastily married to the Duke of Danescliffe, a widower sixteen years her senior, and went with him to the ancestral castle at Lyngore. But she was a Llewelyn and her hot Celtic blood rebelled at a husband she did not love and the strangeness of the English countryside.

She tried to run away, but she was brought back the very same night and locked in her room; and she wept and pleaded to be allowed to enter a convent and become a nun.

The Duke was an indifferent husband. Once he was sure that his young wife had become resigned to her fate he neglected her and devoted himself to more congenial matters. It was a strange household, governed by the Duke's sister, a celibate noblewoman who treated Imogen with silent disdain. The Duke's children by his first wife, a boy called Hector, and two girls, Caroline and Elizabeth, had remained unmoved by their father's second marriage. When they chanced to meet Imogen they stared and passed on, and if she,

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hungry for youthful company, beckoned to them, they turned away their heads and pretended not to see.

Even the servants refused to acknowledge her as mistress. Her two personal maids were the only friends she had. When, on such rare social occasions as could not be avoided, she was obliged to appear in public, she seemed rigid and aloof, her magnificent dark beauty offset by the reserve of her demeanour. Great men paid her homage and ladies were gracious towards her, but none befriended her.

At twenty two she was a recluse leaving her own apartments only on compulsion. When she rode, galloping the lonely roads and neglected countryside with reckless abandon, it would be before the sun had risen or after dark, on wild and stormy nights. She harnessed her horse and returned it to the stable herself. So independent was she and so taciturn that the groomsmen were afraid to approach her.

She was a splendid sight on horseback. Audacious and picturesque in her swathed black cloak, with the ebony braids of her lovely hair flying loose and wild behind her. Few saw her, for she took care not to be seen, and it can be believed that even the Duke was unaware of her capricious excursions, for he would never have permitted them. The castle was large, and the Duchess's apartments, in the extreme left wing, were remote from the main part of the building. Exits and entrances were so numerous that it was easy to go and come unnoticed.

So Imogen led her own unfettered and solitary life, having dressmakers and coiffeurs call upon her, and depending upon the staid Megan Williams and the bouncing Margaret Davey, her two personal maids, for company. Both women were Welsh, not as the Llewelyns were Welsh, with a mixture of Celtic and foreign blood in their veins, but as purely bred as intermarriage could produce them. And being Welsh they were imaginative and superstitious. Sentimental at heart, and prudent and calculating on the surface, their hates and their passions were inexorable. When they saw how their lady was treated, nothing could have dragged them away.

Margaret, the younger of the two, had already found a suitor in Lyngore with whom to spend her leisure hours, but Megan had long since been disillusioned concerning the ways of men. Her passion was folk lore. She used to regale her mistress with legends as old as the Welsh hills themselves, as she sat and talked with bated breath of things that had happened which belonged neither to Heaven nor earth.

Imogen, as she listened, neither believed nor disbelieved. She knew the minds of the uneducated Welsh. But there was something within her that responded to Megan's fantasies. Something stimulating and comforting in the notion that when God and man

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ceased to be of assistance there may still be a third inexplicable power that could be called upon for help.

There came to the castle, in the summer of Imogen's twenty-fourth year, an Italian entertainer with his marionette theatre and his exquisite collection of tiny stringed puppets. It was a performance intended for the children, in honour of Caroline's ninth birthday, but so fascinating did it prove that the Duke, in one of his rare moods of generosity, bade the artist stay another day so that his wife might enjoy the realistic play of the dolls.

Imogen sat and watched with unusual pleasure. The miniature puppets danced and romanced. They moved so effortlessly that it was difficult to believe that they did not live and breathe. Indeed, Imogen had to handle them herself to be truly convinced that they were what they appeared. Having done so she was loth to be parted from them. Each was perfect, down to the minutest detail. She longed to have them for her own.

The Italian could not be persuaded to sell his equipage even though the Duchess asked him to name his own price. He respectfully explained that puppetry was an art requiring many years to perfect, and that his tiny artistes would be of little value to her Grace without his expert manipulation. Imogen exclaimed imperiously that she would study the art herself; he must stay and instruct her. He spread his hands apologetically. He had appointments to fulfil. He was due in London very soon and next month he was to appear before the King and Queen.

When he could see that the Duchess was bitterly disappointed, a happy idea came to him. In Milan was a maestro who was little known but a genius of the art. Not only did he create puppets of exceptional beauty, but his skill of manipulation was something to be marvelled at. He had a family all of whom had devoted themselves to puppetry. The wife and daughters dressed the dolls, and their work, no less than the maestro's, was beyond praise. The son, an artist of imagination, painted the little figures, gave them their complexions, their lips and flesh, and characters, and it was said of him that he could create replicas of living persons which were uncanny in their resemblances.

If Her Grace could persuade this family to journey to England, continued the Italian, they could create for her a collection of marionettes which would be unique, and they would also erect a theatre for her and teach her the skill of manipulation. It would be necessary, of course, to provide them with a workshop and accommodation, and the expense—here the artist again spread his hands with a deprecatory gesture—but who wished to discuss expense in the same breath as art?

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"Yes," said Imogen, and her eyes sparkled with anticipation as never before.

She sought audience with the Duke and besought him to finance the expedition. So amazed was he that this proud creature should thus demean herself that he stared at her in astonishment. But her request was refused. The Duke took pleasure in expressing his contempt for her childish absurdity.

Imogen was near to tears, but she would not have been a Llewelyn if she had not reared haughtily and reminded him that she had not come to him penniless. What she asked for, she said, was no more than that to which she was entitled. He and his family would have no more peace of mind unless her wish was granted.

The Duke laughed, but the vehemence of her words lingered with him. When, later in the day, his horse stumbled and threw him, he remembered them. He remembered them also when he was summoned to the nursery to observe the mysterious rash with which his youngest child was suddenly stricken.

He did not wait for further mishaps but sent word to the Duchess that he would, on this occasion, concede to her wishes providing she promised to seek no further extravagances.

Imogen agreed with alacrity.

The Donizettis arrived at Lyngore in the autumn. Wizened Agello with his white hair and strange magnetic eyes, Maria his wife like a round and chirping sparrow, the two shy daughters, Theresa and Angela, and Ciano, the son, bronzed, full-chested, and aggressively masculine.

The servants expected Imogen to fall in love with this young Adonis. She did not do so, although he followed her about like a dog. She spurned men, all except old men like Agello. With him she walked in her own garden and talked for hours.

The maestro studied her, taking note of her likes and dislikes. Before he shaped one tiny figure he had to know her mind like his own. For he, and not the Duke, her husband, had been called upon to give her progeny, and these he must produce from his brain. His workshop, the women's nimble fingers, and Ciano's palette and brushes, remained unused for weeks.

But how full and lively was the left wing of the castle with the Donizettis to make it so! The chatter of female voices could be heard from the women's quarters, and from the turret room, where the stage was being erected, sounded the sawing of wood. Megan said that even the corridors stank of garlic, and Margaret forgot her duties as she paused to admire the silks and the satins, the brocades, broadcloths, muslins and velvets which were used to make the beautiful little costumes.

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Imogen was more active than she had ever been before. Wig-makers had to be summoned, minute boots and shoes had to be discussed and ordered. And all the time she was learning, learning. Bending beside the maestro and holding the fine strings in her own eager hands. It was not easy, and at first she despaired of acquiring the delicate touch and precision necessary for bringing the small performers to life.

She did not practise with her own dolls but with some old ones provided for her lessons. When she saw those especially designed for her, her delight and amazement knew no bounds. For one was her own replica, and looking at it was like looking into a mirror and seeing herself a thousand times reduced in size. Another was Megan and another Margaret, and yet another her horse Rupert.

There was not one amongst them she disliked. Not one resembling the Duke, his children or his unyielding sister. There was a bevy of female figures, young and old, and there were so many different male characters that it was impossible, at first, to observe each one thoroughly.

Still the Donizettis went on producing. Changes of costume for each of the puppets, curtains and scenery for the stage, animals and props. It seemed as though their work would never be completed.

But at length it was, and when the maestro had satisfied himself that Imogen could manipulate her collection, at least not clumsily, he and his family prepared to take their leave.

The turret room was lofty and spacious, circular in shape and remote even from Imogen's own apartments. It was reached by a flight of steep stone steps, and had never been used. Now its many windows were hung with thick velvet curtains to keep out the light, and its walls were white, smooth and unadorned. A rich carpet completely covered the floor so that footsteps were soundless. Here was the magnificent stage, curved with the shape of the room and hung with the same dark blue velvet as the windows. And here too, in a vast oak closet, the puppets and their wardrobe were stored. There was a broad low couch, upholstered in blue velvet, where Imogen could rest when she desired.

Days came when the Duchess of Danescliffe never left this room, when her meals were carried up to her, and she spent swift-flying hours examining and dressing her collection, and improving her skill as stage manager. But she never felt—no matter how adroit her manipulations—that her tiny performers obeyed her will. They seemed to have minds of their own. The white-haired old aristocrat, whom she always dressed in formal attire, was as obstinate as he looked. He would bow stiffly from the waist but refused to sit in a

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chair. He was but one example of the peculiar behaviour of these new companions.

She altered stories she had read to suit her own tastes, as Agello Donizetti had imagined that she would, and, on the whole, the marionettes had a happy and lively time together. Sometimes, watching them, she felt her own solitude all the more keenly. What fun it must be to be one of many! To be surrounded by others similar to oneself.

This nostalgic longing caused her to give precedence to the little effigy of herself. It must dance more gaily than the others, it must be the most popular, the most sought after, the most loved.

And, being beautiful and vivacious, it must have a partner, a fairy tale prince, or a hero.

Men were cruel, but it was difficult to dislike the tiny male marionettes of her collection. Each was exquisite in his own right. This statuesque and swarthy fellow, like a buccaneer. He rode a horse as though he were made for it, and he could dance. Should he partner the diminutive replica of herself, or should it be this blond handsome one, who was surely a prince, and whose eyes were as blue as sapphires? Leopold the lithe and swarthy, or Richard the fair and valiant? The little Imogen could have her choice.

She flirted and vacillated, giving her favours first to one and then to the other. The watching Imogen was shocked before she was amused. This, then, was how a lady chose her lover! Let it be so, it was only play. No harm could come when the marionettes lacked the warm red blood that causes humans to suffer.

Soon it became apparent that Imogen, the doll, had fallen in love with her blue-eyed knight. She would not lose sight of him. The Duchess, in a teasing mood, took him and laid him aside in his box. And the small Imogen drooped and nothing would comfort her. When he was replaced on the stage a touching love scene took place. All the assemblage rejoiced, except Leopold, who mounted his horse and rode away.

The living Imogen pitied and admired him, but she was too enthralled with her lovers to give him more than a fleeting attention. She could hardly bear to leave her dolls that evening. To retire to her boudoir which was bereft of life and happiness, bereft of love. She felt the ecstasy of the dolls' reunion in her own being, the joy of looking into that fair handsome face, of feeling strong eager arms around her. Ah, lucky doll, tiny and fragile though it was. The live breathing Duchess would gladly have changed places.

But she *was* the doll. Her dreams blurred and fused identities. She tossed restlessly. Why was she lying in this large lonely bed when her lover awaited her? She must return, return. Shrink to the

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size of a Lilliputian and become herself.

Then it was happening, had happened, and she was leaping up the steep stone steps to find love and gaiety. How welcoming was the reception that her friends gave to her! They gathered round her, and some even kneeled and kissed the hem of her gown. Her lover, Richard, was a hundred times more ardent and tender than she had remembered. Leopold had a hearty laugh, like a resonant peal of bells, and, as it sounded, his white teeth glistened from his parted lips. He was breathtakingly attractive.

In the morning she was again lying in her boudoir, and Margaret was coming in to wake her. But she remembered her dream in every vivid detail. She had at last experienced true happiness, even though it were unreal. But was it? Megan had said that happenings had taken place in this world which no human being would ever understand. Happenings prompted by neither God nor man. And suddenly the Duchess of Danescliffe knew, with a clear and impassioned certainty, that when she returned to the turret room she would find, once again, her friends, breathing, living, real.

The puppets had come to life—or Imogen had become a puppet. Whichever it was, she would never again need to manipulate them by strings. Last night the strings had disappeared for ever.

She dressed in such a state of tremulous excitement that she could scarcely stand while Megan fastened her gown. And Megan, the inviolable, said nothing, knowing full well that when her mistress's emotions became interpretable she would hear of them. For this loyal servant was Imogen's only confidante.

For three days the duchess was self-imprisoned in that turret room, and only Megan was permitted to attend her there. Imogen sparkled with health and animation. Her beauty, with this added quality of happiness, was dazzling.

"What size do I appear to you?" Imogen laughingly asked of Megan one day.

"Your Grace is as usual," the Welshwoman said.

"How extraordinary," mused Imogen. "You do not seem different to me, Megan. Yet this place which used to be a room has become a sphere. The garments you bring to me fit me, yet those designed for the other Imogen fit me too. You shall see for yourself. You remember the gown of emerald and silver lace made by the Donizettis?"

Megan nodded.

"I shall be wearing it tonight for the ball given in my honour by Leopold's uncle the Prince," continued Imogen. "Come

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early and you shall see me in it."

When Megan returned to the turret room in the swift gathering dusk of late afternoon there was no sign of her mistress, but on the stage, alone in solitary splendour, stood the tiny doll. Imogen, wearing the beautiful emerald and silver gown.

As Megan gazed at it, it appeared to smile. The same radiance of spirit as was her mistress's infused it. The Welshwoman crossed herself—and hastily withdrew.

The next day the Duchess was less animated; she reclined on her couch and asked, "Tell me, Megan, is it wrong to ride out into the moonlight with one who is not your betrothed? Last night Leopold tempted me to leave the ball and ride with him. It is wonderful to find a companion who is such a fine horseman—remember how I used to ride alone?—but this morning Richard sulked. He had no cause other than that."

Megan busied herself with brushes and combs. "Perhaps he is a little jealous, Your Grace," she ventured.

"But he must not be." Imogen turned her dark head towards her servant. "We must not act like—like—humans, Megan. With petty spites and imaginations which lead to wretchedness and worse! I shall not allow it."

"No, Your Grace," Megan agreed respectfully.

"Perhaps by this evening he will be himself again," the Duchess continued more happily. "We are driving out to have dinner with the Dowager Queen. It is such a beautiful drive through the woods and then through the Palace gardens, and the weather is so lovely—it is always lovely there."

But two days later there was disquiet again in the Duchess's new-found paradise. "They have arranged a duel," Megan was told. "How foolish they are!" Imogen laughed. "It is a good thing that they cannot harm each other. For where there is no blood there can be no wounds, so I am not unduly perturbed. I shall punish them both by disappearing completely until tomorrow. Have tea served in the small drawing room, Megan; I shall be down presently."

Once again the Duchess graced her own apartments. She passed her time by talking to Margaret, and attempting to read. She even went out into the grounds to visit her horse Rupert in his stall. In the evening, after dinner had been served, she called Megan to her for company. She had become very restless.

Megan tried to think of a legend her mistress had not yet heard. A clock chimed as she began her story, and the Duchess sprang to her feet.

"This is unbearable, now," she said. "In another half hour

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they will be meeting in the wood. What if they *can* harm each other?"

She turned to her servant for comfort. "They have rapiers, Megan, so fine and sharp that I shiver with apprehension. I wish Donizetti had not made them. What shall I do?"

The Welshwoman was troubled. She dared not advise on what was beyond her comprehension. But her mistress did not wait for her reply. "I must go," she exclaimed. "I must stop them. Then I shall have no reproach for myself afterwards."

It is said that the Welsh have premonitions of approaching tragedy. There was no sleep for Megan that night, and when, just before dawn, she heard the howlings of a dog from the stable yard, she rose, dressed hurriedly and climbed the steps to the turret room. There was no response to her knock, so she opened the door and walked in. On the lighted stage was the full assemblage of marionettes, and she approached it, knowing what she would see before she ventured to raise her eyes.

It was a woodland scene. There, in the centre of the stage, were the two male puppets, one still clasping the rapier on which the light glistened, and the other bending over a figure lying on the ground.

There were seconds, onlookers, and an apothecary kneeling respectfully beside a little figure in a green riding habit. The whole scene was one familiar to playgoers. One that had been enacted over and over again by strolling performers and actors. Some horses were tethered, some held by groomsmen, but the chestnut stallion, Rupert, stood neglected. His mane mixed with the hastily discarded reins.

And there was the intruder, who, for love, flung herself between the combatants and was accidentally and fatally plunged. There, too, were the many onlookers in poses of agitation. The lover grief-stricken, the rival stunned.

The duchess was found lifeless on the moors. Her sudden death was the cause of much excitement, but far less genuine grief.

There was no bruise or injury to suggest a fall, and yet the horse Rupert had wandered disconsolately back to his stall alone.

On the body there was an infinitesimal perforation just above the heart. A pin prick said the apothecaries, too superficial to have done any harm.

It was the Duke himself who observed the similarity of attire worn by Imogen the doll and the body of his late Duchess. He started enquiries, but the results were closely guarded.

Nevertheless, rumours began to circulate, and there was talk among the servants, though no one dared speak openly for fear

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of the Duke's displeasure. So no one could ever say for certain how the beautiful Duchess of Danescliffe met her death; and even now, in the village that lies below the lonely ruins of Lyngore, the country men and women will argue Imogen's fate as if these strange events happened only yesterday.

* * *

THE OWL WHO THOUGHT HE WAS GOD

Once upon a starless midnight an owl sat on the branch of an oak tree. Two moles tried to slip by unnoticed. "You!" said the owl. "Who?" they quavered, for they could not believe anyone could see them. "You two!" said the owl. The moles hurried away and told the other creatures of the field and forest that the owl was the greatest and wisest of all animals because he could see in the dark and could answer any question. "I'll see about that," said a hawk, and he called on the owl another very dark night. "How many claws am I holding up?" said the hawk. "Two," said the owl, and that was right. "Can you give me another expression for 'that is to say'?" asked the hawk. "To wit," said the owl. "Why does a lover call on his love?" asked the hawk. "To woo," said the owl.

The hawk reported to the other creatures that the owl was indeed the greatest and wisest animal because he could see in the dark and could answer any question. "Can he see in the daytime, too?" asked a fox. But all the other creatures laughed at this silly question. Then they sent a messenger to ask the owl to be their leader.

When the owl appeared among the animals it was high noon and the sun was shining brightly. He walked very slowly, as with great dignity, and he peered about him with large, staring eyes, giving an air of tremendous importance. "He's God!" screamed a brown hen. And the others took up the cry "He's God!" So they followed him everywhere and when he began to bump into things they began to bump into things, too. Finally he came to a highway and he started up the middle of it with all the creatures following him. Presently the hawk, who was the outrider, observed a lorry speeding towards them and he reported: "Danger ahead." "To wit?" said the owl. "Aren't you afraid?" asked the hawk. "Who?" said the owl calmly, for he could not see the lorry. "He's God!" cried all the creatures again, and they were still crying "He's God!" when the lorry ran them down. Some of the animals escaped, but most of them, including the owl, were killed.

Moral: You can fool too many of the people too much of the time.

JAMES THURBER

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PULLING STRINGS

It was a personal message, straight from the Other Side

by MARGARET BONHAM

ANYONE could see what sort of a room it had once been, before George and Dominic had taken it over. A room for polite conversation, the vicar's wife to tea, Apostle spoons and postcard albums of the Italian lakes. Instead of reconstructing, George and Dominic had superimposed themselves on the background. They had left intact the armchairs covered with pale chintz to match the curtains, the thick rosewood table and bureau, and the glass-fronted bookcases in which they replaced Dickens and Scott by Proust and Gide. Faint but frequent darker rectangles on the sunbleached walls were the scars of George's grandmother's water-colours, castles on the Rhine and Windermere in Spring, painlessly removed. In the largest rectangle, over the fireplace, Dominic had drawn in red and dark grey chalk a unicorn with a little female figure asleep in a little iron bedstead balanced on its extended foreleg.

After they had been in the house a week, and George had got used to the feeling of having inherited it, he had sold the flowered carpet, brushing out of it first the week's lumps of mud and the ground-up pastels, the cigarette ends, the flakes of dried oil paint. He sold it for sixty pounds, which he spent on a machine for earthing up his potatoes; it was not a very successful buy—George and the machine got badly earthed up and the potatoes stayed bare; but it was more use than the carpet, it did at least disturb the weeds. Cressy, the girl who worked for them, brought a hearthrug down from one of the bedrooms, and Dominic stamped out cigarettes and ground his chalks and George tramped bits of mud into the bare parts of the floor, and Cressy swept them up in no time.

George removed all his grandmother's ornaments, and installed a kind of operating-table lamp over the desk, and had a newly-painted beehive standing in one corner on a double sheet of *The Daily Telegraph*; Dominic's easel and some canvases were propped between the windows, and intellectual weeklies were piled on the table; but the chintz armchairs and curtains and the rose-wood furniture and a footstool in *petit point* were still there. You could see what sort of a room it had once been.

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On a summer morning Dominic was painting Cressy in this room, while George had gone off to the market with eighteen dozen lettuces, and Cape, Cressy's father, was cutting flowers for a wedding order. Cressy sat in an armchair, wearing her green overall. Only her head and shoulders were being done; she could cautiously move her hands and feet if she kept up a fixed stare, and when Dominic retreated behind the easel she did so. Sitting for a portrait sounded like a rest, but proved fatiguing. Her eyes kept glazing over; she was not allowed to talk. She endured shooting pains in the neck, and worried about the tidying-up.

The large room was full of a warm clear light, indirect, for the sun did not reach it until the afternoon. Out of doors it was dry and hot; the shrunken river glided along the valley, and in the field beside it George's tasselled sweet corn sprang seven and eight feet high, like a straight, pale forest against the dark crooked one on the other bank.

Cressy sat staring at the unicorn, in a sweet but painful haze. She had a small head and a long neck, rough darkish hair and long grey eyes. Dominic found her paintable; this was the third portrait. The first had appalled her. Now she had a vague idea of what Dominic had tried to do; when she was dusting alone in the room she turned it round and looked at it in a bewildered fashion, but sometimes with a gleam of understanding.

She had left the village school at fourteen, and that was nearly six years ago, but for the last eighteen months since they had arrived and taken her on, George and Dominic had been educating her pretty heavily in a one-sided sort of way. Cressy's mind was in a curious state, clogged up with new and difficult ideas, but it was slowly beginning to work on them, and when they saw signs of this Dominic and George were pleased, because they had tried to teach her to think for herself. While she sat in the chair being painted, she was thinking that there must be some reason for drawing a bedstead on a unicorn's leg, and trying to work out what it was, instead of saying to herself, as she used to say, that George and Dominic were both nuts. She thought one day she might ask George. He was better-looking and more sensible and painstaking and easier to talk to than Dominic. Perversely, it was Dominic she preferred.

The telephone rang, Dominic, pacing to and fro, concentrating, dabbing and appraising, took no notice; Cressy did not like to move. It rang seventeen times in couplets, and then stopped.

Cape came through the door from the garden, embracing a very fancy bouquet of belladonna lilies and asparagus fern. Above the purple stems and pink trumpets his small face was dark with disapproval, his moustache limp. He stood in Dominic's line of

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vision, sniffed at Cressy, and muttered, "Wastin' time. Disgustin'."

"Oh, you," said Cressy, provoked. "You don't know art from Thursday."

"Some of us got to work," said Cape.

"Don't let me stop you," said Dominic. "This is the third time you've come between me and your daughter with those perishing lilies; are you rehearsing them or something? Aren't they done yet?"

"All but the ribbing," said Cape, sourly. "I got to tie a bow on. They rung up about 'em again?"

Dominic looked vague, and said, "I dare say. Someone did. I was busy."

"They got no call to fuss," said Cape. "Half-past twelve they said and half-past twelve they'll get 'em. I'm going down on me bike in a minute."

"I must look out of the window," said Dominic.

Cape snapped his teeth and walked off with the bouquet. Shifting her feet, Cressy got back into position. Dominic turned away and lit a cigarette. The back of his alpaca jacket was its original blue, the front was of the colour and texture of imitation-marble linoleum, where the paint got wiped off. He picked up his palette and began again. Cape swayed past the window on a bicycle, in a bower of pink lilies. The telephone rang.

"Death and pestilence," said Dominic. He put down his brushes, seized the receiver and called into it irritably, "They're on the way now. Cape has just . . . What?" he said. "Oh, I thought—yes, I can take it. Pencil—wait a minute—yes, all right. Yes. Yes. Yes. Oh. Yes, go on. Yes. Signed what? M for Mary? Medmore? Oh. Are you sure it's for here? Oh. Well, all right; thank you. Yes, I think we had better have a copy—the light may break if we get it in black and white. Perhaps too late, but it would be nice to know. You did say two fifty, didn't you? Yes, I was afraid you did. Well, thank you—goodbye."

Dominic replaced the telephone and went off into a trance. "I don't know anyone called Medmore, do I?" he said to Cressy. "It looks as if I soon shall," he said dispiritedly. "You can get up," he added.

"Is he coming here?" said Cressy, unlocking her neck and shoulders.

"He," said Dominic, "or she, or it, or they. It was not addressed to anyone, only to the house, but it must be for George. But he has never talked about Medmores. It's really a most unnerving telegram, Cressida."

"There's the car."

"It could be some kind of aunt or something."

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"Oh no, it's our car," said Cressy. "I know its noise. It's the jeep."

"I mean the telegram," said Dominic moodily. "I had better go and wash my brushes, I think. You tell him. It's all written down on the little pad you bought." He went off with the painting and some of his paraphernalia. Cressy began to tidy up, at a distance from the telephone, so that she could not possibly see what was on the little pad even if she wanted to. In a minute, she thought, after she had delivered the message, she would go and put the potatoes on for lunch.

George came in from the garden. He wore a blue cotton shirt, corduroy trousers and gumboots; his hair looked very light and his skin very dark, from the sun. He said enigmatically, "Nine a box." The edge of a cheque stuck out of his pocket.

"That's good," said Cressy. "You thought six. There's a telegram come. It's written on the pad."

"Oh, is there?" said George. He bent over and read it, without picking it up. "Medmore?" he said. "I don't think I—it must be Dominic's. What's he doing?"

"He says not; he says it's yours."

"I haven't got any Medmores," said George, shaken. He raised his voice slightly and said, "Hi!" Dominic appeared, spraying drops of water from the ends of his fingers.

George said, "It must be for you."

"I have never known a Medmore in my life," said Dominic. He looked at his watch gloomily, and added, "I have only three hours more in which to say that."

"They must be Cape's," said George a little wildly.

"Oh no," said Cressy.

"Well, they're not mine. They—or I suppose they might be my grandmother's. Perhaps they—oh, heavens," said George suddenly, and struck his forehead. "Medmore. Yes, she was, she was that one, I do remember. I met her when I was about eighteen. Dynamic type. Oh, misery. We can't stop it now."

"Do you mean she thinks your grandmother is still alive?" said Dominic, sitting down and fishing out a cigarette.

"No, of course she doesn't. She was my grandmother's greatest friend. My grandmother was always talking about her. Hermione says, Hermione thinks, Hermione wouldn't agree. She did something or other, but I forget what it was—Christian Science or pewter brooches or one of those things. No, this is going to be a lest-auld-acquaintance sort of visit; she's coming to be nostalgic over the house."

"When she sees my unicorn and no carpet and all the other things, she will be rather more than nostalgic."

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"I suppose she will," said George. He seemed appalled. He added, "I believe she's rich, too."

"Expectations?"

"I hardly think. Even if there were, there won't be, anyway. Besides, I don't want expectations; I want to be left alone. It's a long time since I've had a more sinister telegram," said George, doubling up over the pad again. "'Bringing rations'; is she coming to stay?"

"I'd better clean up," said Cressy suddenly.

"Merely cleaning up is no good," said Dominic, rousing himself from thought to take charge. "What we must do is to put all your grandmother's objets d'art back in their places, and then she will be nostalgic quite happily for one evening and we can easily get rid of her. If we don't she will stay on poking around to find out what has happened to them, and besides there are your dim expectations to be considered, and she will certainly tell all your relations you're living in squalor, and then you will have no expectations at all. What a pity you sold the carpet."

"You seem to think we can shake her off like an over-ripe greengage. They're stickers, my grandmother's friends are, I feel sure."

"I will shake her off," said Dominic, "you can leave that to me. Cressida can get the spare room ready, and we must rout out all the pictures and vases and the clock in a glass case from the attic. Your grandfather can hang over the unicorn. It doesn't matter so much about the other rooms—we can say they are going to be decorated. Cape had better take the jeep and meet her at the station. Is she going to be alone, George? Are there any male Medmores?" Dominic had talked himself into an interest. "*A la recherche du temps perdu*," he murmured to his cigarette.

"How do I know?" said George, who remained despondent. "She wasn't married, but there might be hangers-on; she was younger than my grandmother; she'd only be about fifty five. I wish she hadn't said, 'Bringing rations.' That's what I don't like."

"I'd better go and get the lunch," said Cressy, without moving.

"Oh, never mind about the lunch, for heaven's sake," said George. "We can have bread and cheese; there's no time to cook. You go and begin on the spare room—no, you'd better sweep up in here first while we go and get the water colours down. Where am I going to put my beehive?"

"In the garridge," said Cressy. She was not going to have beehives in her kitchen.

"The cats will walk on the paint," said George feebly. "Oh, all right," he said. Cressy went off to fetch her broom.

The gilt clock under a glass dome, wound and set going, said

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twenty to three; George and Dominic lay in armchairs, looking exhausted but complacent. The gilt frames on the walls emitted gleams, tired but complacent, too, where the afternoon sun struck them. George's grandfather, large, disapproving, and dark with varnish, glowered over the mantelpiece and concealed the unicorn. Two bronze horsemen reared in a hostile manner towards him from below, one on either side. Rugs of conflicting patterns covered the paint splashes on the floor. The beehive had gone, so had the easel; a pleated pink shade with a frill blossomed, surrealist, on the chromium stalk of George's desk-lamp. Past the window and down the drive towards the station roared the jeep, with Cape driving; he had been wrenched away from bedding something out; he looked livid.

"I forgot to tell him to clean it up," said George. "It's full of mud and cauliflower leaves. I suppose it doesn't matter."

"If she is tedious about clothes she will have to take the taxi, that's all."

"I brushed it out a bit," said Cressy. She stood on a chair dusting the picture frames. Her nose shone and her hair stuck to her forehead.

"Magnificent," said George, "did you really? You've worked like a black. Look, go easy on those frames—I couldn't find the right sort of nails. You don't want to get stunned by *Sunset on Maggiore* at a moment like this. Do you think it's all right?" he said, looking round the room. "It doesn't look quite the way it should to me. I can't remember where everything went."

"The geranium ought to be a fern," said Dominic. "It was one of those green fringed ones with a rather obvious sex life, don't you remember? We could say it died."

"Well, it didn't; I wish it would. It keeps sprouting out of my compost heap."

"Yes, well—she need not see your compost. And there were crochet mats on the backs of the chairs, I think; but they could be at the laundry."

"Antimacassars," said George. "Cressy took them off and you wiped your brushes on them for months, and then they got thrown away."

Cressy, who had salvaged one and kept it in a drawer at the cottage, under her winter clothes, went faintly pink.

"I suppose I ought to change my jacket," said Dominic, "and put on a tie. Or need I?"

"Unless you're going to keep your back to her for the rest of the day, I think you ought, Dominic—and your front makes muffled noises when you bend; they're probably startling to anyone who's not used to them like us. I'm going to get my corn cut before she comes, now."

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"You will get blood-poisoning," said Dominic, half-attending.

"He means the sweet corn," said Cressy.

"That's what I mean," said George severely. "Twelve dozen—Cape can pack them after tea. If I don't do it now I shan't have a chance later, and they'll go overripe and I'll never be able to look a corn in the cob again." He went off towards the garden.

"Well, George, I implore you," said Dominic, rousing himself, "not to stay cutting your corn till the last moment; she will turn up and I shall be left alone with her. I don't mind getting rid of her for you, but I feel you ought to see her first."

"Oh, all right," said George. "It's never less than half an hour late. I'll be around. Cressy, make him change."

Dominic went on lying in the chair. "This room unnerves me," he said when George had gone. "It's right and yet it's wrong. If she stays more than one night I think I shall get in a state."

"It'll be different when she's here," said Cressy. "You ought to go and put your other jacket on."

"Very well," said Dominic. "If I were a nice person I should cut his corn for him; I didn't offer because I pretend not to want to be here when she comes, but I do want to, really, because it will be so unpleasant that I shall enjoy it. George is a very nice person, Cressida; I am not nice at all." He got up and walked out. Cressy stood on the table staring after him, with the duster in her hand.

Dominic changed his coat and washed and came back to an empty room; Cressy had gone off to make cakes for tea. He put an austere Palestrina record on the gramophone and lay down in the chair again, and when it had played through he stretched out an arm and reset the needle at the beginning again. Palestrina will be off-putting for a friend of George's grandmother, he said to himself; that is what I pretend I think. He stretched himself out with his eyes shut, and when he opened them there was Cape in the doorway, furious, with Miss Medmore and a young woman.

Dominic stood up at once and turned off Palestrina; he rested one hand on the gramophone as if it were a Victorian wife's shoulder, and Miss Medmore was for a moment disconcerted, seeing black hair where she was prepared for light, and unexpected and different bones, and a face composed in a shape she did not remember. Dominic had time to look her over. He took in the baroque curves of nose and cheek and grey bun and the mounds of green tussore silk, a material he abhorred, to the skirt of which (Cressy's brushing-out had been perfunctory) clung a shred of cauliflower leaf, and classified her as Female, Small, Spherical.

She was perhaps attractive, if you liked small spherical females in late middle age—animated, bright-eyed, interested; but Dominic did not. His tastes ran to gaunt equine types. Miss Medmore had a

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dry look about her, as if with any extra crackle of vivacity she might explode into dust; to touch with a fingernail her powdery skin or hair or the green silk would, he felt, set his teeth on edge. "Oh," she said, "how you've changed—I always thought you were fair. Or can it—no, you can't be George . . ." Her voice was fluty. There are players who can make a flute sound as though it needs greasing; she was like one of those.

Dominic renounced an impulse to say "Ten years is a long time." He put on the alarming formality he used with strangers, and answered, "How do you do? No, I am not George; I live with him at the moment. My name is Dominic Quin."

"Oh, well—how do you do?—you will know all about me," said Miss Medmore in a burst of relief and enthusiasm. "I was a great friend of George's grandmother, you know, and this is my companion, Miss Stanley—Ellen, this is Mr. Quin; we had to pass quite near here, you see, we're going off on a long holiday to explore the country, and I did so want to see the house again—it does seem different in a way, but it hasn't really changed; it's so nice to be back."

"Oh, George has made some alterations," said Dominic absently. Part of his mind was circling uneasily round the words Long Holiday to Explore the Country, and part of it was examining Miss Stanley, who had beautiful eyes and legs and a very silent look. Dominic did not think he had made a good impression there, but in any case this was the last thing he wanted to do; he hoped Miss Stanley was getting over a broken engagement or something of that kind and disliking men in general, so that she would not succumb to George's charm and want to stay for a week.

At this moment George came in from the garden, approaching Miss Medmore from behind, and said he was sorry not to have been there before. Miss Medmore jumped. Dominic made a mental note.

Among the flutings about George's grandmother, and how delightful to see all the old things again, but surely the little Roman vase used to be on the bureau, and I believe you're taller than ever, George dear, and now tell me what you've been doing, Dominic sagged in his chintz armchair and slid glances at the gilt clock. At four Cressy would bring tea; but it was not yet twenty-to. Miss Stanley was quite silent. Her large greenish-blue eyes moved from George to Dominic, from Dominic to Miss Medmore, who bounced and fluttered. George behaved impeccably, but looked very slightly anguished; he was trying to remember what it was Miss Medmore did, without losing his grip on the conversation in case she told him and he was too busy thinking to listen. Dominic was waiting for a line on how to get them out of the house in the morning; apart from

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having promised George to speed Miss Medmore's departure he wanted to get on with his portrait of Cressy, which was going to be good.

"It was always such a happy house, after your grandfather died," said Miss Medmore. "She gave it such a sense of security, you know; one always felt so safe here; of course, houses have personalities just like people; I mean they reflect them—I always know when I go through a front door. It's a—"

George's face cleared suddenly: he clapped a hand on his knee. "Now I remember," he said. "I know what it was you did. You were—"

At this very moment, as dramatically as the unseen gunman in a film shoots someone who has just begun to talk to the detective, George's grandfather positively leaped off the wall over the mantelpiece and crashed into the hearth. George had been right; they were indeed the wrong sort of nails. Miss Medmore gave a small shriek and jumped out of her chair. In the stunned pause that followed Dominic's idea came to him, complete. The lifebelt thrown by Providence—he had no sooner received it than he took action, picking up George's grandfather and saying, "I was afraid of that. It looks as if it has started again."

"What has?" said Miss Medmore. She stood quivering slightly; Dominic fancied he could see a dim aura of dust, of powder, round her curves. He said, "The manifestations. Poltergeist, you know. We had trouble with it once before."

"Poltergeist?" said Miss Medmore in a throaty whisper.

"Yes," said Dominic. "They are psychic disturbances that sometimes occur in houses; nothing is ever seen, but things are thrown around and there are noises, and they are very destructive—last time, George was quite badly bruised by a pewter ashtray."

"I don't think—" said George unhappily. Dominic gave him a hostile glance.

"Oh, good heavens," said Miss Medmore, "look!" She pointed a dry finger towards the wall. "It's drawn something, up there, where he was hanging, in chalk," she said, peering. "A unicorn, and a bed on its leg, and someone in it—oh, it's quite abnormal. No human creature would draw that, would they?"

"No," said George, brightening up.

"Incredible! It's the most extraordinary thing that it should be Frederick's portrait," said Miss Medmore, who seemed to be battling with some kind of violent emotion. "He never liked me, you know—when he was alive he tried to stop me from seeing your grandmother; of course I couldn't agree to that, but he did try, you see. He was always furious when I came to the house."

This was easy; Dominic accepted it almost without thinking.

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"It *is* rather strange," he said, "because when we had the manifestations before it was the day a man came to call who had always been on bad terms with George's grandfather. One of the bronzes was suddenly propelled right round the room in a half-circle, about shoulder height, and struck him above the left ear. We all saw it. That was the first time—there were other things, too," said Dominic, getting warmed up, "footsteps, and water being poured on the beds, and so on, but they stopped after the ambulance had taken him away. It was odd, wasn't it?"

Miss Medmore, listening intently, ran her tongue along her lips. She asked, "What was his name?"

"Barrington-Lewis," said Dominic instantly. He caught the tail end of George's despairing gesture. No backing from that quarter; Dominic began to feel resentful. "Wasn't it, George?" he said.

"I don't think we—" said George.

"Barrington-Lewis; no, I can't quite . . ." Miss Medmore shook her head. "Perhaps a business acquaintance. But that doesn't matter; what concerns me is the poltergeist; before I saw the drawing, you see, I thought what happened with the picture just now was simply an indication of a hostile spirit—his, you know—but if you're sure the activities were really a poltergeist that makes all the difference; no, I can't believe it; it's really too wonderful."

"Oh, there's no doubt whatever—" Dominic stopped. "Too *what?*" he said.

"You see, it's my great interest in life," said Miss Medmore, the anonymous emotion now revealing itself only too plainly as rapture, "psychic research, that is, I've spent years on it, and we were just going off to explore one or two places in the Midlands, but this is far more enthralling. Of course I'm only an amateur, but I've always been fascinated by it."

"That's what I'd just remembered," said George dismally, "when it fell down."

"Oh," said Dominic. He could not believe that George expected him to back out at this stage. "Then of course you will know all about them," he said to Miss Medmore. "They're an extremely interesting phenomenon, but the trouble is they are so very destructive and sometimes dangerous. The charm soon wears off."

"Some are harmless," said Miss Medmore.

"Ours is not." Dominic's eyes met Miss Stanley's impassive stare; he looked away to a water-colour of Oberwesel, silently imploring it to fall. Another manifestation must very shortly be organized; how he did not know. Miss Medmore leaned as far

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forward as her bosom would allow, and said, "Have you an adolescent female in the house?"

George's chair gave a loud creak; he had not read any books on poltergeists. Dominic, however, had—probably (he thought) the same ones as Miss Medmore.

"Yes," he said, "we have a girl who works for us."

"Of low mental calibre?"

"One might say yes," said Dominic after a slight pause. This new crisp efficiency on Miss Medmore's part was intimidating; also the door that led to the kitchen was open.

"Ah," said Miss Medmore.

Dominic was beginning to look strained. "Sometimes there is quite a long gap between manifestations," he said. "Last time they—"

Now for the moment he was saved: through the door from the passage sailed a teacup, in a graceful parabola, and smashed itself against the window-seat. "Ah," said Miss Medmore again, entranced. George took out a handkerchief and dabbed at his temples. "There, you see," said Dominic. "No one else is in the house—Cressy will not be back till four. I'll go and make sure, and I can put the kettle on too. I hope you will be safe in here—this was where it was most active before. Or perhaps George could show you your room and then you could look at the garden."

"Yes, of course," said George. "Do come upstairs, and you must see my corn. It's quite a sight."

"On the cob, you understand," said Dominic. If George lets me down, he thought, after all I have done, I shall just have to leave until they are gone; but I don't think he will. He watched their departure and then went down the passage to the kitchen. Cressy, in ankle socks but no shoes, stood by the table looking at once anxious and triumphant.

"Was that right?" she said. "It was the cracked one."

"It was genius," said Dominic. "I thought for a moment it might be just a manifestation of fury because I had to say you were of low mental calibre. Was it?"

"Does that mean loony?"

"Well, slow in the uptake, more. Where there's a poltergeist there's quite often a not very bright young girl in the household who is thought to be the cause of the disturbances, without knowing it. Cressida, how *did* you know about flinging the cup?"

"I was listening in the passage," said Cressy. "You gave me that book to read once, about them. I thought you'd want something else to happen, so I chucked it in. I can remember all the other things they do, too."

"Cressy—"

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"Yes," said Cressy, drawing in her breath.

"There isn't time to say it now," said Dominic. "We've got about twenty minutes or half an hour—at least that, I think, if they go out in the garden. Will you help me? There may not be another chance tonight, not for me, anyway. Is the tea ready?"

"I got it soon as they came. The kettle's on. We better mind they don't see us through the windows."

"Or hear us," said Dominic. He took off his shoes. "Bring that ball of thread out of the drawer, Cressy, and come with me. I am enjoying this," he said, and walked cat-like up the passage and back to the drawing room.

George propelled Miss Medmore and Miss Stanley on an exhaustive tour of his six acres; he showed them the wall fruit, the vinery, the tomato house, the flowers, the cucumbers under Dutch lights, the orchard, and his potatoes and summer cauliflowers and sweet corn and lettuce and his special lilies. Every time Miss Medmore spoke of poltergeists he said Yes and No and went back to technicalities about glass. "You mustn't let it upset you, George dear," said Miss Medmore, "these psychic phenomena, I mean—you don't know how lucky you are. You're not worried, are you, George?"

"I don't like it," said George with truth. He looked at Miss Stanley, who was examining the grapes. Miss Stanley turned and gave him a sudden clear and friendly smile. Her teeth, like her eyes and legs, were beautiful. George cheered up a little. "No," said Miss Medmore vaguely, "there's nothing to worry about. I could see it was a shock to you when the manifestations began again; you obviously didn't want to talk about it, but it's *so exciting* for me. Don't you think we ought to be going back to the house? I wonder if—"

"You must just see my cantaloups," said George. Out of the corner of his eye he had caught a glimpse of the top of Cressy's head moving across one of the drawing room windows. The sill was at waist level: Cressy must have been crawling on all fours. "Through here," said George in a kind of croak, as he asked himself whether Dominic would get off with manslaughter if he killed Miss Medmore with a bronze horseman and a length of twine.

"Does your friend Mr. Quin help you in the garden, George?" asked Miss Medmore, allowing herself, though reluctantly, to be chivvied out of sight of the house.

"Well, he does a certain amount," said George, "but mostly he p——" Remembering the unicorn, he stopped himself in time from saying "paints" and substituted the first thing he could think

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of, which turned out to be " plays the piano." Gosh, he said to himself then, I must be losing my grip.

" That's not very helpful for you," said Miss Medmore severely.

" Well, Cape helps me," said George. " Dominic has to practise."

" Oh, you mean he's really good—a professional ? He does look rather artistic ; I do hope he'll consent to—"

" I think tea must be ready by now," said George, raising anguished eyes from his cantaloups, which Miss Medmore had ignored. Talking loudly about compost, he led them back to the house. In the drawing room Dominic got up from one of the chintz armchairs ; George gave a lightning look round the room, but since he had forgotten where they had arranged most of his grandmother's ornaments he could not be sure whether anything had been altered or not. He then looked at Dominic and made an attempt to convey the idea of professional piano playing, but Dominic was telling Miss Medmore, who had at once asked him about manifestations, that none had occurred while she was out of the house. He contrived, by an unnatural lack of emphasis, to make this sound rather pointed. George sighed and sat down.

" I hear Cressy," said Dominic. " Tea must be coming."

" Delightful," said Miss Medmore, " and after that I do hope you'll play, Mr. Quin."

" Of course," said Dominic, " if the poltergeist allows it, but I am not an expert on Blackwood or anything fancy like that."

" Modern composers are so difficult," murmured Miss Medmore, vaguely discreet.

" I was telling Miss Medmore," said George, rushing in head first before Dominic could start explaining the Four-Five No Trump convention for slam bidding, " you were training to be a concert pianist. She was hoping you'd play ; what a pity about your hand."

" Most unfortunate," said Dominic. " I strained a muscle yesterday, helping George."

" Oh, you must let Ellen look at it," said Miss Medmore. " She's a qualified masseuse."

" Which muscle ? " said Miss Stanley, unexpectedly producing a voice.

" The one up the middle," said Dominic. " There's really nothing to see ; it just needs rest." He directed a hostile glance at George and let his hand fall out of sight over the arm of his chair. Six feet behind Miss Medmore a small bamboo table glided briskly along the polished floor to the corner, turned round once and fell over.

Miss Medmore let out a delighted scream.

" You see, it's begun again," Dominic said. He picked it up.

" Listen," said George, " something bumped upstairs."

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"*Yes*," said Miss Medmore, enthralled, "I heard it too." Footsteps began to thud over their heads, like someone demented pelting round and round a room; the lampshade swung; everyone stared at the ceiling, and Dominic wound up a length of thread with one hand and transferred it to his pocket. The footsteps suddenly stopped.

Miss Medmore and Miss Stanley went on gazing upwards, the one rapturously, the other without expression.

"No one is upstairs," said Dominic.

"Of course not," said Miss Medmore. "It's all exactly right. Footsteps are one of the commonest phenomena in poltergeist cases."

"If ours confined itself to footsteps it would not be so bad," said Dominic.

Cressy came in from the passage door, twisting her hands in a large crumpled white apron. Dominic looked at her to see if she was noticeably out of breath; she was not; he gave her a faint private smile. Cressy said vacantly, "Shall I bring the tea, sir?"

George turned round in his chair and stared at her.

"Yes, please," said Dominic in a loud firm voice. "Cressy, did you hear a noise upstairs?"

"Yes, sir," said Cressy. "I thought it were you."

"Where were you when you heard it, Cressy?"

"Where were I what, sir?" said Cressy, knitting her brows.

"Where were you when you heard the noise upstairs?"

"I bin in the kitchen since I come in, that what you mean?"

"That's what I mean," said Dominic. "You can bring the tea in now."

"Perfect," breathed Miss Medmore, watching Cressy blunder out. She emerged from her psychic transports to say to George, "How nice for you having Mr. Quin to run the house—it means you can get on with your work, doesn't it?" Dominic interpreted this as a crack at interfering friends who order the staff around. He meditated pulling the thread that was to upset a vase of peonies down Miss Medmore's neck. But Cressy came back from the kitchen empty-handed, at a lumbering trot. "Here," she said, "someone bin in and put all the chairs up on the table and wrote on the wall. You look."

"While she was in here, you know," said Miss Medmore, who was by now behaving like a conjuror who produces trick after trick, each more mystifying than the last, becoming with each more complacent. She pattered out to the kitchen after George. Dominic brought up the rear, to make sure Miss Stanley did not stay behind and examine all George's grandmother's ornaments for threads. In the kitchen a pyramid of three wheelback chairs was piled up on the table, a shoe was balanced on one, and over the whitewashed wall

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facing the door the word MOVE was scrawled in red chalk.

"Oh yes, yes," said Miss Medmore, and clasped her powdery hands, "it's exactly what they do; chairs get levitated, you know, and mysterious messages scribbled on walls—it's perfectly true to type."

Dominic reflected that if Miss Medmore found anything mysterious about MOVE she must be even thicker-skinned than he had feared; perhaps he should have written GO AWAY.

"You ought to read about poltergeists," Miss Medmore said to him. "There's one very good book on them, you know; you'd recognize every one of these phenomena."

Dominic said to himself, I should not be at all surprised. "I must order it," he murmured. He glanced at Cressy, who stood leaning against a door that led to a small staircase going up to the loft, with her hands behind her. Cressy stared vacantly at the table; her lower lip drooped and she fidgeted. Into her trance burst a succession of deafening metallic sounds from the stairs, like an iron water-butt bounding from step to step, ricocheting against the walls, ending up against the door with a crash that propelled Cressy into the middle of the room. The panels shook, but held fast. "Good *lord!*" said George into the silence. He took hold of the handle. "It's locked," he said.

"It never is," said Dominic.

"Well, it is now. The key's gone."

"Doors are frequently locked," Miss Medmore said happily.

"Some doors are," said Dominic, "but this is not that kind. It leads to a loft."

"I mean by poltergeists."

"Cressy, did you lock the door?" said George.

"Beg pardon, sir?"

"Did you lock this door and take the key away?"

"That isn't never locked," said Cressy.

"Oh well . . . We'll take the tea in with us," George said resignedly. He picked up the tray. Cressy said could she take the chairs down off the table now, sir, and Dominic said yes, and let us know if anything else happens. He went out last, and gave her over his shoulder his half-smile of approval. The contraption on the stairs, he thought, was both skilled and successful; they had worked it out between them; tied a strong thread round an enormous brass jar from the attic and balanced it on the top step, fixed a weight on the thread and rested it on a ledge inside the door, and let an inch or so of the thread hang through the keyhole; when Cressy pulled the end the jar came down and the weight pulled the thread out of sight. Neat and foolproof, Dominic considered.

During tea the key suddenly dropped from nowhere on to an

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iced cake, and embedded itself. George and Miss Medmore went out to the kitchen and unlocked the door, and found nothing on the stairs. Cressy was sitting at the table, chewing in a bovine way ; she watched them without interest. They were hardly back in the drawing room when the footsteps began thudding round and round over their heads ; and then a bell rang persistently from somewhere behind the fireplace. During the bellringing Cressy came in with hot water ; they were all in the drawing room, and yet the sound went on and on.

When she returned to the kitchen Cressy resumed her normal expression of intelligence and continued her peculiar duties as methodically as if she were cooking ; she reached into one of the cupboards and removed a pound weight from the tail of a brass tortoise that George's grandmother had used as a table-bell ; she wound it up again and replaced the weight, and while it rang she went out into the garden and crawled on all fours under the drawing room windows. Miss Medmore was just saying, " In most cases the disturbances tail off gradually, you know, but sometimes—" when a shower of dried peas fell round her, rattling on the polished floor like hail. Three or four splashed in her tea. " Yes—yes, of course," she cried, " often it's pebbles, but there was one case of haricot beans, I remember reading about it—yes, it's quite common . . ."

George picked up a pea and examined it suspiciously. Opening his mouth to say that on the former occasion also most of the manifestations had been harmless but the dangerous ones occurred quite unexpectedly, Dominic was frozen on the first words by a bellow from Cape outside the window. Cape had come round the corner of the house with George's rubber-tyred wheelbarrow, and found his daughter grovelling on all fours and throwing dried peas through the drawing room windows ; speechless, he watched while she backed out of the flowerbed, and then found his voice and let fly : " Wot d'you think *you're* doin' ? "

Dominic turned an agonized glance on George ; Cape was difficult to handle. " Excuse me," said George, and went to the window and called to Cape. " Is that Merritt's dog again ? Hang on, and I'll come and give you a hand." He grimaced Cape into silence ; Cressy shot out of sight between them and George swung his legs over the sill and disappeared. Sounds of pursuit and angry cries from George dwindled away down the garden.

Dominic leaned back in his chair. Now he is doing better, he thought. He said, " It's the sheepdog from the farm. Sometimes it gets in and runs over George's seedbeds, which is very distressing for him." He wondered if Cressy had been put off by encountering her father ; but no, she went on doggedly. Thumps shook the ceiling and another kind of bell rang, the kind that tinkles. George

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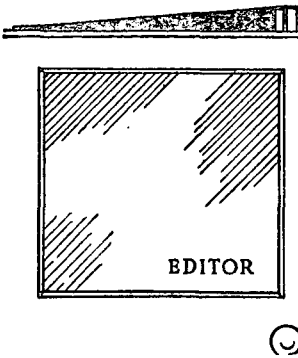

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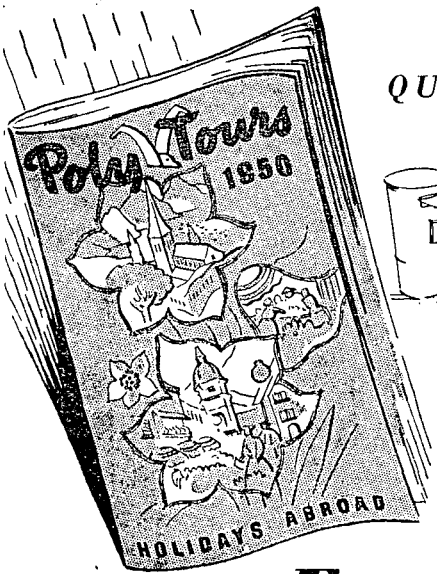

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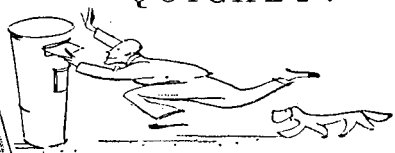

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came back from explaining to Cape, with an exhausted air. Dominic was beginning to feel tired himself; his admiration for Cressy increased with every thud. Miss Medmore grew with every thud more entranced—even the vase of peonies failed to damp her enthusiasm; she mopped her back hair and said she hadn't come across anything so interesting for years. George saw Dominic looking meditatively at the bronzes on the mantelpiece. He said how would it be if they all went for a walk. Miss Medmore and Dominic, though for different reasons, showed an equal lack of co-operation. Miss Stanley sat smoking and gazing under her long eyelashes at George. A thin spatter of broad beans fell on to their heads.

"Oh, come on," said George with a rush of determination, "it's perfect out; we can go down by the river. We needn't be long."

"I think perhaps if you will excuse me," said Dominic, "I'll—"

"Oh, nonsense," said George, turning unnaturally hearty, "we'll all go. Exercise does us good—you're too damned slack, you artistic chaps. You'd like a walk, wouldn't you, Miss Medmore?"

"Well, I—just a short stroll, yes," said Miss Medmore feebly.

"I will take the tea things out," said Dominic, "and join you in the garden." He looked murder at George as he passed; George had his back turned; he was holding Miss Stanley by the elbow.

When Dominic emerged through the kitchen door George and Miss Stanley were already out of sight; Miss Medmore loitered, waiting for him. It was not until they were on the way back that George manœuvred Miss Stanley on to Miss Medmore and fell behind with Dominic. "Sorry," he said, "but I couldn't see any other way of getting together with you."

"You are an ungrateful and unhelpful clod," said Dominic, talking angrily out of the side of his mouth, "and if I had known I was going to walk with your grandmother's friends while you diverted yourself with dumb but inviting companions I should not have worked my fingers to the bone organizing manifestations for you."

"That was only because you hung around so long in the kitchen," said George, "and she's not dumb; she's only shy, I think."

"Professional companions should not be shy."

"She isn't, with me; she talks quite a lot. It's only when you're there she's silent."

"Indeed," said Dominic, not displeased. "Why is she a professional companion, anyway? With those legs I should have said she could do better than that. Has she got expectations, too?"

"Certainly not," said George irritably. "You've got a thing

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about expectations. It's a temporary job. She massages Miss Medmore."

"What an intolerable idea," said Dominic. "It must be like beating a dusty carpet."

"Look, can't we stop talking massage? We've only got about five minutes. The thing is, I don't think poltergeists are going to get rid of her, do you? Rather on the contrary, I'd say. If only I'd remembered what she did before she came we shouldn't have got into this mess. It was a brilliant idea of yours, too—I'm beginning to enjoy it."

"If I could be as magnanimous about your idea that I played the piano, George, I would."

"Well, I'm sorry about that," said George, "it was the first thing I could think of that began with the same letter as painting. If I'd said painting she might have guessed about the unicorn. The point is, what are we going to do now?"

"There are three things we could do. We could go on producing manifestations that get more and more inconvenient, like pouring water on the spare beds; or you might have a kind of nerve storm and I could implore her to go away to save your reason; or we could stop the phenomena and hope she would find it too tedious without them. If you like I will devote the evening to boring her about irrigation systems or North American moths."

"They'd almost certainly turn out to be her subsidiary hobbies—and I don't want the spare beds permanently ruined really, and I couldn't throw a convincing artificial nerve-storm; but do poltergeists just stop suddenly? She said they didn't."

"As a rule they tail off; but I suppose if the control were removed they might stop."

"But you keep telling her she's the control because of my grandfather; we can't remove her, that's the whole point."

"I don't think you quite grasp the theory of poltergeists, George. In some cases the manifestations just occur periodically for no apparent reason, but sometimes a combination of circumstances or one particular circumstance starts them off—at least that was the theory in the book Miss Medmore and I have both studied. In either case the control—if you like to call it that—is usually thought to be a young person, often what Miss Medmore calls a female adolescent of low mental calibre, who being naturally vacant is unaware that the phenomena have anything to do with her. There is another theory that poltergeist activities—"

"Well, look, Dominic, engrossing as it is, there's no time for lectures. What you mean is, she thinks all the disturbances are caused by Cressy, is that it?"

"Yes. And there, of course, she is perfectly right."

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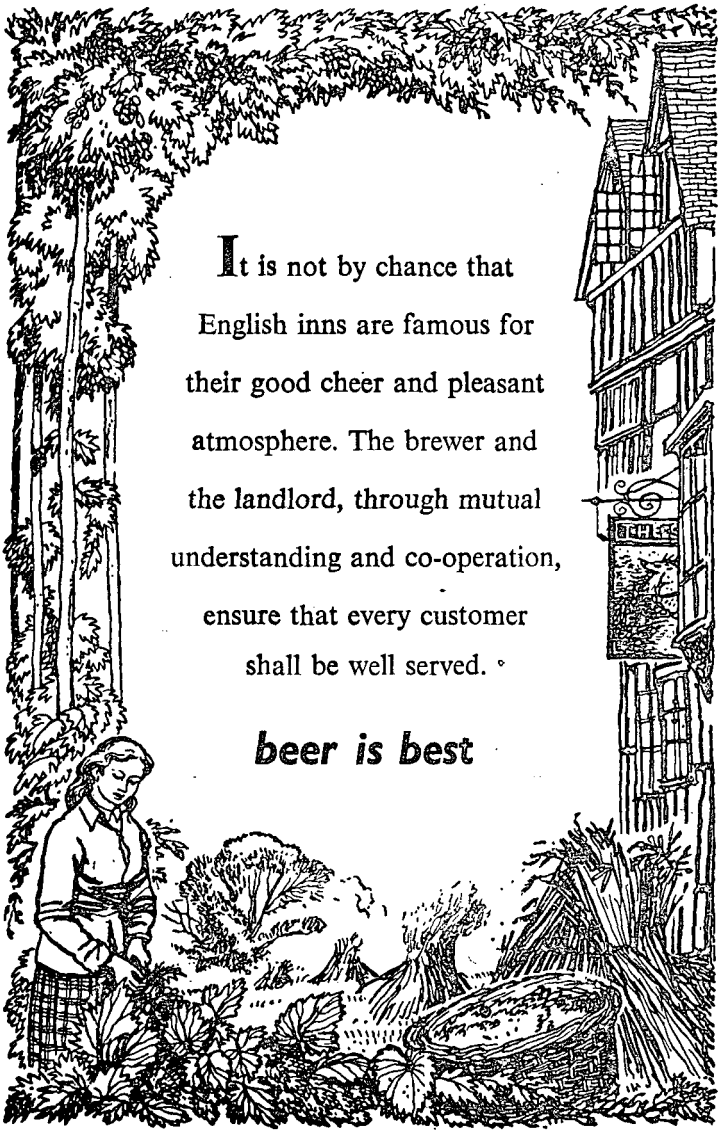
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"True," said George. He allowed himself a private giggle, and then peered anxiously ahead through the leaves to where Miss Medmore and Miss Stanley rustled in single file along the path. "They can't hear, can they?" he said. "Well, the only thing to do seems to be to get rid of Cressy for a day or two, and then the poltergeists can stop, and Cape can look after us, and what with Cape's cooking and no manifestations she ought to be gone in no time, Miss Medmore, I mean. The only thing is, she will take Miss Stanley with her."

"In that case you can invite her back again by herself, Miss Stanley, I mean."

"I thought you didn't like her."

"My dear boy, no one can have feelings on the strength of two words about muscles; how do I know whether I like her or not? You obviously do; very well, then. In any case I have something else on my mind."

"All right. Well, what are we going to do with Cressy?"

"That is what I have on my mind; I am going to marry her."

George went on walking in front, with his hands in his pockets, frowning. He muttered, "She could go to her aunt's in the village."

"I have just told you, I am going to marry her," said Dominic rather loudly.

George stood in the middle of the path, staring. He said, "Marry Cressy?"

"Why not?"

"It was just rather a shock," said George, swallowing. "I don't see why not. No, I think it would be quite a good thing for both of you; in fact, I think I'm quite glad."

"Thank you," said Dominic, "in that case perhaps you could deal with Cape for me."

"I expect I could," said George. "Have you asked Cressy yet?"

"No, I can't say I have exactly asked her; but something happened in the kitchen just now that encouraged me rather."

"I suppose you mean you kissed her and she liked it. You'd better take her to her aunt's this evening and talk it over—let's catch them up now before they begin to suspect."

Dominic, outmanœuvred, found himself walking beside Miss Stanley, while George and Miss Medmore went on in front. George's strawy head was bent earnestly; he was explaining to Miss Medmore that Cressy wanted to stay with her aunt for a while because of the noises. Now, he said, they would all be able to sleep.

"Yes," said Miss Medmore with a kind of glum resignation, "of course I see it's all very difficult for you. In any case," she said, "we have to leave in the morning. I've booked at an hotel

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in Shrewsbury, and we're lunching with some friends."

"Oh yes," said George. He passed a hand over his forehead.

"What delightful weather," said Dominic to Miss Stanley.

"Yes."

"I hope you don't find the country too dull."

"Oh no," said Miss Stanley, "it's most entertaining."

"Some people find it tedious. We have to arrange our own amusements, but perhaps it's good for us to organize them."

"By pulling strings?" said Miss Stanley gently. Dominic looked sideways at her. "Oh," she said, "what was that bird? Did you see it fly out?"

"A black-throated upstart," said Dominic at random. "They are always silent in the summer," he added.

"Oh yes," said Miss Stanley.

"Shall we go this way?" said Dominic, opening a gate.

In the dining room Cressy had laid a cold supper and left it ready. Dominic found her in the kitchen, winding up the tortoise. "I've done some more things," she said, "there's a thread tied just under your chair by the sideboard, and that picture that come down before, I've—"

"You've been wonderful."

"You did want some more, didn't you?" said Cressy, peering up at him. "You said you did."

"Yes, I do," said Dominic, "just till after supper. Cressida—"

"You know, George," said Miss Medmore, helping herself to artichoke salad, "you should really write an account of these phenomena. I could give you the address of a man who'd be most interested—I'm sure he'd want to come down and investigate, and it would all get in the papers. Wouldn't that be good for your vegetables? When I get back to town I must go and see him, he'll be—there's the bell ringing again."

"Yes," said George. "I don't think we—"

"But of course you must," said Miss Medmore. A peony petal and two feathers clung to her hair. Dominic leaned back, and the gong leaped from the sideboard and clanged on the floor. "There," she said, beaming at it. "Oh, I've enjoyed it *so* much," she said to George.

After supper George lit a small log fire in the drawing room, saying it was getting cold. In about a quarter of an hour he intended to propose a walk, and since the manifestations would have stopped he thought a fire would be an alternative inducement to Miss Medmore to stay behind. Through the window, in the still warm sunlight, they saw Dominic and Cressy drive away in the jeep. Dominic drove rather slowly, in a remote control fashion, sitting

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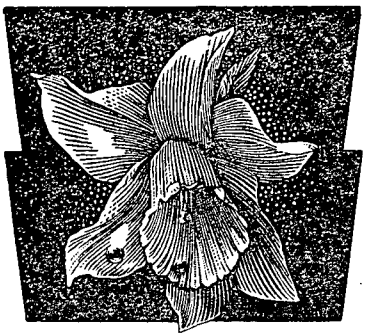

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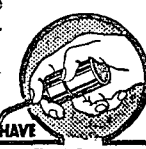

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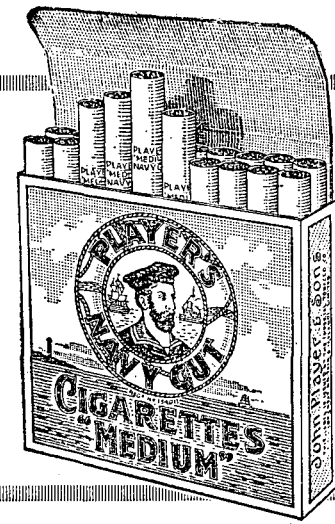

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on the other seat and holding the wheel obliquely so that he could see what was coming round corners. It was the wrong vehicle for him; he would have looked better in an electric brougham. His method of driving occupied all the front; Cressy squatted behind him, with her chin near his shoulder. Her face was bright pink.

"She seems a nice little girl, George," said Miss Medmore kindly. "They're often very good workers, too; not having much intelligence doesn't seem to affect the way they cook. I wonder what she'd think if she knew she was really the cause of all the phenomena."

"I can't imagine," said George, opening two more windows.

"Of course it would be impossible to explain," said Miss Medmore. "She wouldn't take it in. What a delicious fire."

"Yes," said George. He cleared his throat and swallowed. "Would you like to come for a walk?" he said to Miss Stanley.

"That would be lovely," said Miss Stanley.

When she was left alone Miss Medmore pulled up her chair close to the fire and rubbed her hands together. She put her head on one side and listened, but no bells rang; she looked round the room, but all the furniture stayed still, the vases and the ornaments might have been cemented in their places. There was not a sound. Disappointed, she sighed and picked up one of Dominic's intellectual magazines and opened it at a reproduction of a modern painting; she turned it upside down and inspected it closely. Suddenly there was a pinging sound—perhaps the heat had expanded the threads in the cord where Cressy had cut them not quite through. Down from the wall above the mantelpiece swooped George's grandfather again.

Emerging head and shoulders from the canvas, imprisoned in the frame, Miss Medmore sat there smiling beatifically. Poltergeists were enthralling, but there were other psychic phenomena too; George's grandfather had done this twice. It was nothing to do with adolescent females. It was his personal message from the Other Side.

* * *

SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD on page 160

Across. 1, Down and out. 6, Jump. 10, Satyr. 11, Chronicle. 12, Frowning. 13, Crete. 15, Bramble. 17, Trouble. 19, Illness. 21, Enteric. 22, Allah. 24, Assassin. 27, Inspector. 28, Orate. 29, Note. 30, Speechless.

Down. 1, Dust. 2, Waterfall. 3, Arrow. 4, Decline. 5, Upright. 7, Uncle. 8, Precedence. 9, Knock-out. 14, Obligation. 16, Brethren. 18, Barricade. 20, Start up. 21, Elstree. 23, Liszt. 25, Sloth. 26, Tess.

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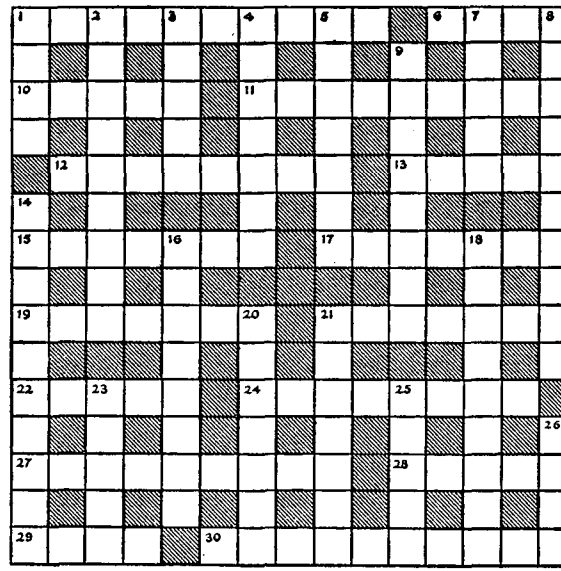
ARGOSY CROSS WORD

Solution on page 159



CLUES

Across

1 Destitute in two directions (4, 3, 3).

6 This over the sticks may be Beecher's preliminary (4).

10 "So excellent a king; that was, to this, Hyperion to a —" (Hamlet) (5).

11 Historical sequence (9).

12 No plough assists this furrowed state (8).

13 Erect Mediterranean island (5).

15 A prickly problem for those who this behead (7).

17 T with a silver coin makes a spot of bother (7).

19 A sick promontory that may require the doctor! (7).

21 An unpleasant form of 19 across (7).

22 So! The French, and the Bluff King be praised! (5).

24 Not two foolish animals inside but one treacherous man (8).

27 A good-looker in one sense (9).

28 O! The speed of speech! (5).

29 May be written musically or hurriedly (4).

30 Overcome or merely left out of the script? (10).

Down

1 If you bite this you'll have come a cropper! (4).

2 Is a tall wafer likely to cause this cascade? (9).

3 Pointed in love and war (5).

4 One hundred and fifty one could find shelter in a valley but refuse (7).

5 Honest but not necessarily in this direction (7).

7 He resides at the sign of the three brass balls (5).

8 A question of order (10).

9 Punch was probably the cause of this finale (5-3).

14 Under this you might be heavily burdened (10).

16 May be of Plymouth, but strangely enough rarely of the same family (8).

18 Barrier—made by me in a drinking place, perhaps, with a fifteenth-century rebel (9).

20 Opens, but back to front it makes rather an intruder (5, 2).

21 Set and reel are appropriate representations of this English place (7).

23 Composer — with an incline one way or the other? (5).

25 "I abhor this dilatory —and tricks of Rome" (Henry VIII) (5).

26 Hardy's heroine from Blackmoor Vale (4).

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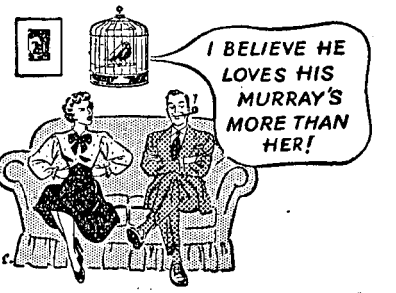

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